SYMBOLS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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DEVOTIONAL STUDIES

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To

THE MEMORY OF

WILLIAM BURT POPE, D.D. (EDIN.)

TO WHOSE INFLUENCE AND TEACHING
THIS BOOK IS DUE

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to expound those symbols which are explicitly used in Scripture to set forth the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. In attempting this the writer wishes to show that the bestowal of the Holy Ghost is placed by the Father in the pierced hands of Christ, through whom His influences must be sought. It is to be feared that much modern teaching concerning the Spirit is forgetful of this sublime truth. No doctrine of the Spirit can be true which does not, like Himself, 'glorify' Christ. The writer has tried to illustrate the doctrine of the Spirit from life, literature, and modern psychology. The theme has fascinated him for many years, but he is very conscious that it opens up vast fields of thought which no one writer can hope to traverse, much less to explore. The substance of some of the following chapters has appeared in *Experience*, a journal for the use of 'class-leaders' and other Christian workers. These chapters, in a fuller form, together with some additional ones, are now offered to the general student of devotional theology.

J. H. H.

LYTHAM.

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PRELIMINARY STUDY

The Nature and Work of the Holy Spirit

God through Himself we then shall know,
If Thou within us shine,
And sound, with all Thy saints below,
The depths of love divine. (*C. Wesley.*)

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' As we enter on the study of the great and mysterious subject before us we would remind ourselves that the supreme qualification for it is a heart filled with one purpose, the glory of God. If there come into our effort any strain of self-seeking, intellectual pride, or scepticism, the vision of God, the Holy Ghost, will grow dim. Our first, our constant prayer, if we would 'see God,' if we would, as far as is possible to the feeble powers of the human mind, understand the teaching of Scripture concerning the Spirit, must be for the 'pure,' the cleansed heart. Beyond even that we must seek the illumination of the Spirit Himself. As we seek our way into these holy realms of truth, may 'the white Dove of God's Spirit fly before us,' to show the path!

I. Who and What is the Holy Spirit?

No perfect answer can be given, for the triune nature of God outsoars the human mind. But, as distinguishing Him in thought from the Father, and

from the Son, we may venture on a definition of the Spirit, as set forth in the completed revelation of the New Testament. *The Holy Ghost is God, as He makes Himself felt in the human soul, through Christ,* the aim of this inward operation being to form in man the love, and mind, and character of Christ. More briefly, the Holy Spirit is God as He dwells in Christ, operating in our hearts there to create His own Image. We hope that the significance of this definition will unfold itself as we sketch the gradual teaching of the Bible, from its beginning to its close. 1. We must not think of the Holy Spirit as a mere *influence.* He is a living *Person,* for it is God Himself who works within us. 2. Nor need we ask if the Holy Spirit be *divine,* for again it is God who indwells our spirits. 3. The Holy Spirit being thus divine, has existed from all eternity. In a way we cannot understand, Father, Son, and Spirit, have always co-existed in the Deity. 'The Spirit proceeds timelessly from the Father, and is co-eternal with the Father and the Son' (*Amphilochius*).[1] Hence before the Incarnation of Christ, we find traces of the Spirit's work. In the Old Testament there are ninety passages in which direct reference is made to the Holy Spirit, and eighteen different designations are applied to Him. Seven names set forth His relation to God. Of these the most frequently used is that of 'The Spirit of the Lord,' which occurs twenty-three times. Four names express His character, viz. 'Thy good Spirit' (Neh. ix. 20), 'A free Spirit' (Ps. li. 12), 'Thy or His Holy Spirit' (Ps. li. 11), 'A new Spirit' (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27).

[1] All quotations from the early Christian writers are taken from *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church,* H. B. Swete, D.D.

Another group of names describes His operations on men. They are six in number. The chief thought in these names is that of Wisdom. Three times the name 'Spirit of Wisdom' is used (Exod. xxviii. 3; Deut. xxxiv. 9; Isa. xi. 2); once the idea is varied in the name, 'The Spirit of Understanding' (Isa. xi. 2), once again in the name 'The Spirit of Counsel' (Isa. xi. 2), and once more in that of 'The Spirit of Knowledge' (Isa. xi. 2). A beautiful fore-gleam of New Testament teaching about the Holy Spirit occurs in Zech. xii. 10, where He is called 'The Spirit of Grace and Supplications.'

But it is only *through Christ* that we know His full nature and energy. The Holy Spirit is 'from the Father through the Son' (*Basil*). For the purpose of illustration, although no illustration is a perfect one, we may adopt the theory that all light first existed outside the sun, as a diffused radiance, but that finally it was gathered into the sun. Now we only know light through the sun. All illumination we trace to its source in that glorious orb; even the cheerful fire that glows on the hearth, or the little ray of the candle shining over the moorlands, are but emanations of the glory of the sun.

So, before the Incarnation of Christ, the Holy Spirit existed in the Godhead, and there were foreshinings and diffusive outgoings of His energy, as we read again and again in the Old Testament. But in the fullness of time His influence was all enshrined and stored up in Christ, and now we know the presence and work of the Eternal Spirit only as continually 'proceeding' from the Father, abiding in the Son, and so 'simultaneously from Both.'

Christ is the Sun whence the celestial beams of the Holy Ghost stream into the hearts of men.

> Come, holy Sun of heavenly love,
> Shower down Thy radiance from above,
> And to our inward hearts convey
> The Holy Spirit's cloudless ray.
> (*St. Ambrose, trans. by J. Chandler.*)

Thus understood, we may say that the *Holy Spirit is the spiritual, personal presence of Christ, the only begotten Son of God, in our hearts.* He is therefore sometimes termed the Spirit of Christ, as well as the Spirit of God. (Gal. iv. 6 ; Phil. i. 19.)

II. The Work of the Holy Spirit is Manifold.

1. In the Old Testament in particular He is described as the Author and Maintainer of Creation, and as the Fountain of all life, whether of the material universe, or of man's intellectual nature : He is God in operation. (1) We find the existence and order of the world ascribed to Him. (Gen. i. 2 ; Job. xxvi. 13 ; Ps. civ. 30.) The beauty of the earth and sky, the wonder of the ocean, are all His handiwork, all the outcome of the interfused energy of Him who is the ' spirit that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, and rolls through all things.'

> The Spirit inspires and actuates the air, and is in it a breath of life to all His creatures. He blooms in the blossom, and unfolds in the rose. He is fragrance in flowers, and flavour in fruits. All things are secretly pregnant with their God. (*The Fool of Quality, Henry Brooke.*)

One Spirit—His
Who bore the platted thorns with bleeding brows,
Rules universal nature. Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of His unrivalled pencil. (*The Task : Cowper.*)

The Spirit of God is around you in the air that you breathe, His glory in the light that you see, and in the fruitfulness of the earth and the joy of His creatures. He has written for you day by day His revelation, as He has granted you day by day your daily bread. (*Ruskin : quoted on his memorial, at Friar's Crag, Keswick.*)

This great fact concerning the Spirit is taught by His very name, for He is 'the Breath' by which all things live. It is in the light of this truth that we must interpret all Scripture which speaks of Creation as the work of God or Christ. Take especially the text, '*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made*' (John i. 1, 3); with this passage compare Col. i. 16 and Eph. iii. 9. The work of Creation is thus variously ascribed to the Father and to the Son, as well as to the Holy Ghost. The unifying truth of these seemingly contradictory statements is in the fact that the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and dwelling in the Son, is the Divine Agent of Creation. He is the 'life' which was in the Word, and which through the Word was the 'light of men' (John i. 4): He was the vital Breath which the Son breathed into all animate creation. But the question cannot be evaded, Was the good and gracious Spirit the creator of the destructive and noisome life which abounds in the earth? Shall we ascribe to Him the blood-thirsty

wild beast, the microbe of tuberculosis and other diseases? We are distinctly told that when God had finished His creative work He smiled upon it His benediction, '*And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good*' (Gen. i. 31). It is impossible for us to say, with any show of reason, that the microbe of tuberculosis, or that the earthquake, or volcanic eruption, or the flood, sweeping away tens of thousands of men, women, and children without warning or help, are all 'very good.' The mind and the heart alike are in revolt against such a statement. For ourselves we believe that all such horrible things are not the direct work of the Holy Spirit, but the results of evolution in a world disordered by Satanic power, and that God is steadily and constantly eliminating them by working either in His own strength, or through the scientific skill He imparts to men, and that the final outcome in His hands will be a new earth in which these anomalies of evil shall not exist, a world in perfect harmony with the divine benignancy. The Holy Ghost is present in nature as a regenerative force, still brooding over it to bring forth beauty and ordered life. The whole creation that to-day 'groaneth and travaileth in pain together' is feeling already the healing touch of His hand, and 'the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption' (Rom. viii. 21, R.V.): 'The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den: they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain' (Isa. xi. 8–9).

(2) As the Holy Spirit is the giver of natural life so is He also the sole source of all man's

intellectual and spiritual capacity. The witchery of music, the loveliness of art, the charm of eloquence, the judgement of the wise, are all His work: the highest, noblest qualities of mind are His gift, though alas! they are often perverted to selfish ends The wisdom of Joseph (Gen. xli. 8), the skill of the worker (Exod. xxviii. 3), the artistry of Bezaleel (Exod. xxxi. 2, 3), the ability to rule (Num. xi. 16; 1 Sam. xvi. 13), the sagacity of Joshua (Deut. xxxiv. 9), the valour of Gideon (Judg. vi. 34), the inspiration of the poet (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-2), are all ascribed to the direct influence of the Spirit of God. In all ages, in every land, He has dwelt and still dwells in the subliminal depths of human hearts, however ignorant and sin-stained they may be, often unrecognized the fountain of all that is best in them. The truth that whatever is good in human nature is due to divine influence has passed into the literature of all periods.

Wisdom is a breath of the power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty. (*Wisdom of Solomon*, vii., 25.)

Who ever gained knowledge of Thy counsel, except Thou gavest wisdom, and sentest Thy Holy Spirit from on high? (*Ibid*, ix. 17.)

Artistry is from God. (*Clement.*)

The classical ancient writers, who had no knowledge of the revelation of the Scriptures, spoke often of man's utter dependence on Deity. 'Nemo vir bonus sine Deo,' writes Seneca, and in many passages, Homer, Socrates, Plato, and the great dramatists insist on the fact that the gods are the origin of all excellence in man. 'The good genius or daemon of

Socrates had almost in his life such a place as the Christian saint assigns to the Holy Spirit' (*James Wells, D.D.*). We who have the Bible need not hesitate to affirm that all that is worthy, noble, magnificent, in the realms of mind and skill is the outcome of the Spirit's influence in man. Not in the same sense in which the Bible is, Milton was nevertheless inspired, and that by the Spirit of God. ' All pure genius is inspired, not in the same degree as the Scriptures, because not for the same purpose, but by the same Person' (*G. C. Morgan, D.D.*). Speaking of his work as poet, Milton writes : ' It is not a work to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine. . . . Not to be obtained by the invocation of dame Memory and her siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases.' Even those of us whose work is not literary or artistic, but plain and practical, find our fitness for our task in the gift of the same Spirit.

I know a man must have the love o' God in his soul, and the Bible's God's word. But what does the Bible say ? Why it says as God put His Sperrit into the workman as built the Tabernacle, to make him do all the carved work and things as wanted a nice hand. And this is my way o' looking at it ; there's the Sperrit o' God in all things and all times—week-day as well as Sunday—and i' the great works and inventions, and i' the figuring and the mechanics. And God helps us with our headpieces and our hands as well as with our souls. (*Adam Bede.*)

Our fullest equipment for life's duties, the highest use of the powers we have, are realized by that

inspiration of the Spirit given to all who ask His aid. The prayer of Charles the Bald may fitly express our hearts' constant desire, 'Come, creative Spirit, visit the minds of Thy faithful servants . . . kindle light in our senses. . . . By Thy breath the understanding is lighted up, and burns with divine fire.' Thus amid all the difficult and perplexing tasks of life we shall realize the divine guidance, as did the Israelites in their toilsome journey through the wilderness—'Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them' (Neh. ix. 20).

2. As the Scriptures gradually unfold their teaching concerning the Holy Ghost we find that His work in human nature grows more intimate and spiritual. It becomes the Spirit of prophecy, of moral purification, until in the New Testament we are taught that He dwells in man as in a sacred temple. Let us try to trace this development of His operations. (*a*) In the earliest references to the subject we read that the Spirit 'came upon' certain men: Balaam (Num. xxiv. 2); Gideon (Judg. vi. 34); Jephthah (Judg. xi. 29); Samson (Judg. xiv. 6, 19; xv. 14). In none of these cases was His coming attended with ethical uplift, nor were the men themselves of high moral character. The Spirit came in these instances as a 'temporary afflatus,' urging them to a special task, and giving them the needed qualification of wisdom and strength. Literally it is said that the Spirit 'clothed' Gideon, but the effect of this investiture on his moral nature was no greater 'than the cut of clothes has on the build of a man's body.' We must not import into these cases the New Testament teaching of the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. It was only 'upon' them

that the Spirit came ; the human heart was not fully ready that He should dwell ' in ' it. Indeed only thrice do we find instances in the Old Testament when it is said that the Spirit dwelt in men (Gen. xli. 28–29 ; Num. xxvii. 18 ; Isa. lxiii. 11). (*b*) In the higher reaches of His work the Holy Spirit ' came upon ' men as the Spirit of prophecy. Early instances of such cases are Eldad and Medad (Num. xi. 26) ; Balaam (Num. xxiv. 2–3) ; Saul (1 Sam. x. 10 ; xix. 23) ; Azariah (2 Chron. xv. 1–2). See also 2 Chron. xx. 14 ; xxiv. 20. But as ever and anon men were so dowered as to be capable and fit instruments of His purpose He became to them a Spirit of holiness and of special illumination. Thus David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and other ' holy men of old ' became the channels of His revelation, and the truths which these seers perceived are imperishably enshrined in the Scriptures (2 Sam. xxiii. 2, compared with Matt. xxii. 43 ; Neh. ix. 30 ; 2 Pet. ii. 1). The passages in which these men of vision speak most fully of the Spirit point on to a future manifestation of His grace which finds its only adequate fulfilment in Christ (Isa. xi. 2 ; lxi. 1–3 ; 1 Pet. i. 10–11). Even the bestowal of the Spirit at Pentecost is in this sense foretold (Joel ii. 28–30 ; Acts ii. 16–18). (*c*) In Christ we find the ever-increasing contact of the Holy Spirit with man reaching its highest expression. Why should any think it incredible that the Source of all life, having assumed myriads of forms, should at last, through Mary, clothe Himself with a real human nature? ' Conceived of the Holy Ghost ' (Matt. i. 20), anointed by the Spirit (John i. 32), living in the Spirit and full of the Holy Ghost (Luke iv. 1),

accomplishing His ministry in His power (Matt. xii. 28), consummating His atoning death through the eternal Spirit (Heb. ix. 14), 'quickened' from the dead by the Spirit (1 Pet. iii. 18), our Lord is the supreme manifestation of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in humanity. The teaching of Scripture now moves to its richest development. The Spirit was given to Christ that He might in turn bestow the gift upon His followers in all ages, and baptize them with the Holy Ghost (Mark i. 7–8); the baptism with the Spirit is our Lord's prerogative, and His alone. Even during His lowly career on earth He exercised the privilege deposited in His hands (John xx. 21–22). But it was when He returned to His Father's right hand, and sat down on His throne, at the very centre of universal dominion, that He 'received' the complete power promised, and was invested with the authority to 'shed forth' the Holy Ghost in all the fullness of His grace (Acts ii. 32–33). (*d*) Pentecost was the hour of the Spirit's embodiment in the Church, His advent to dwell on the earth in God's people, in all His saving power, in fulfilment of the ancient promise. Since the Day of Pentecost the Christian Church has been the home of the Spirit as truly as heaven is now the home of Jesus Christ.

'The Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost descended into the temple of His apostles, which He had prepared for Himself, as a shower of sanctification, appearing no more as a transient visitor, but as a perpetual Comforter and as an Eternal Inhabitant' (*Augustine*).

In the old dispensation His action was intermittent. He went and came, like the dove which

Noah sent from the ark, which flitted to and fro, finding no rest. In the new dispensation He dwells, He abides in the Church; the Dove of God has built His nest, and folded His wings, and found a house for Himself, 'even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.' His abiding presence in the Church of Christ implies His indwelling in the heart of each of the great company of believers who constitute the Church. Practically, after Pentecost, the New Testament is entirely devoted to setting forth the Spirit's work in the life of true saints. 'In St. Paul's writing the biblical doctrine of the operation of the Holy Spirit reaches its completion. He teaches . . . that the Spirit has come to regenerate and restore the personal life, dwelling in the body as His Temple, identifying Himself with the human spirit in its struggle with the flesh, and its striving after God, until He has perfected the nature which the Son of God redeemed, and has raised it to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (*Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 411).

All impulses to holiness, every process of spiritual regeneration, all ascent towards God, each new experience of growth in the divine life are the direct outcome of the influence in the centre of our being of the 'Spirit of Grace' (Heb. x. 29). Present in every human heart, His grace is only set free to work when we roll away the barriers of sin and pride, by penitent trust in Christ. Thenceforward 'currents of power stream up from the unfathomed depths,' to vivify and regenerate the soul, and 'like upbearing pillars' support all our Christian life and service. His presence is the

underlying sustainer of our new experience (John xiv. 17; 1 Cor. iii. 16; Eph. iii. 16). The field of the Spirit's presence is the subconscious depths of the human spirit, where His action is never-ceasing, unless we wilfully 'quench' His grace, not only as we pray or meditate or work for God, but amid the stress of life when attention is absorbed by duty, and probably even in the hours of sleep, and behind the veil of the unconsciousness which drops between the things of earth and the eyes of sick or dying men. Although His action all proceeds in the subliminal hidden depths of the soul it rises often into consciousness, so that we become sure of His presence, through its results. We are filled with a sense of God's forgiveness, and feel that we are admitted into His family; our affections are transformed, we are lifted into joyful communion with God, and into harmony with all the world. 'This working affiliation with God, in which He stands behind the curtains of the subconscious, acting upon the hidden sources of the psychical life, inspiring, guiding, manipulating, making of human powers, peerless agencies aflame with His presence and athrob with His energies—with what indescribable exaltation such partnership endues the life of the Christian!' (*The Psychology of the Christian Life: Dr. Warner*).

The regenerating work of the Holy Ghost is set forth in Scripture under many striking symbols, as light, fire, wind, oil. Each such symbol signifies a special phase of His grace, and in the following pages we endeavour to set forth the significance of some of them. But ere we do so let us remind ourselves that although the Holy Ghost has come

to earth and already dwells in our heart, we may still pray that He may come in fuller measures. The all-pervasive Spirit is not only in the Church and in our heart, but in heaven, at the centre of all saving grace. We may feel the kindly warmth of the sunshine, but that is no reason why the sun may not send down a still more grateful heat and brighter light. So we may ask Christ, who has already given us His Spirit, to shed down stronger influences into our hearts: 'He giveth not the Spirit by measure' (John iii. 34, R.V.). We may pray that the Holy Ghost, who has already come, may descend with mightier energies into His Church. Such blessed baptisms came on the disciples after the Day of Pentecost (Acts iv. 31; x. 44; xix. 6). The Spirit is a *gift* granted in response to the prayer of faith (Luke xi. 13).

> Creator Spirit! by whose aid
> The world's foundations first were laid,
> Come, visit every waiting mind,
> Come, pour Thy joys on human kind:
> From sin and sorrow set us free,
> And make Thy temples worthy Thee. (*Dryden.*)

I

SYMBOLS FROM NATURE

I

Light

Come as the light! to us reveal
Our emptiness and woe;
And lead us in those paths of life
Where all the righteous go. (*Dr. A. Reed.*)

Light as a symbol of God is frequent in Scripture; indeed it is used in one of the three great Bible definitions of the Deity—'God is Light' (1 John i. 5); the other definitions being, 'God is Spirit' (John iv. 24), and 'God is love' (1 John iv. 8, 16). Hence we find it applied to each of the Persons of the Trinity: God the Father is 'the Father of lights' (Jas. i. 17); God the Son is 'the light of the world' (John viii. 12); God the Holy Spirit is the Enlightener of men (Heb. vi. 4; Eph. i. 17–18). The light which comes from the Father, shining in the Son, and which through Him 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' and which specially enlightens the eyes of true believers, is the light of the Holy Spirit. 'Celestial light' is an emblem of the Holy Ghost, which has ever been dear to the Christian heart. It symbolizes both His essential *nature* and His *work*.

I. Light as a Symbol of the Nature of the Divine Spirit.

(i.) This Emblem teaches what the Spirit is in Himself, more fully than does any other figure.

The sublime statement that 'God is Light' takes

in both the declarations that 'God is Spirit' and that 'God is love,' and transcends them. 'It includes the thought of *immateriality*, which finds its most complete expression in the idea of "spirit"; and that of "*diffusiveness*," which finds its most complete expression in the idea of "love," as it is the essence of light-nature to communicate itself' (*Westcott*). The symbol of light even suggests the *universality* of divine love, for the light, like God's love, falls upon the good and the evil. But 'light' as an emblem of the Holy Spirit goes beyond the ideas of spirituality and love, in adding to them the suggestions of *purity* and *glory*. How *pure* is light! The rain is clear as crystal when first it starts from the sky, but is soon muddy; the whiteness of snow is quickly stained; the wind, pure as the heavens at first, is soon laden with germs of disease. But the light, stainless at its origin, contracts no impurity, though it glances through the foulest places—a lovely emblem of the purity of the divine holiness. How *glorious* is light, as it floods the earth with radiance and colour and splendour! The Bible selects light as the fittest symbol of the divine majesty and glory (Ps. civ. 1–2; Hab. iii. 4; 1 Tim. vi. 15–16; Rev. i. 16).

When we think of the immortal honours which attend the Father's Name, and of the glory which gathers around our Saviour's head, we must not fail to say:

> And equal adoration be,
> Eternal Comforter, to Thee.

(ii.) The Emblem of Light shows what the Spirit is in His relation to man.

Light is man's supreme joy and blessing. 'Life

itself begins no sooner, rises no higher, has no other glory, than as the light begins it and leads it on. Sounds have no softness, flowers have no sweetness, plants and fruits have no growth, but as the mystery of light opens itself in them. Whatever is delightful and ravishing, sublime and glorious, in spirits, minds, or bodies, either in heaven or on earth, is from the power of the supernatural light, opening its endless wonders in them' (*W. Law*).

Some English miners were shut up in a mine. Their comrades dug with a will, and after three days got within hearing distance. 'What do you want first?' they cried. The answer came: 'We want everything, but light before all things.' (*Expos. Times.*)

What light is to the world of nature, the Holy Spirit is to the human soul, its chief necessity and its greatest happiness. 'If sunbeams are potent enough, in their noiseless operation, to give to our cold and desolate planet a new face, a new robe of beauty, and a new song, *what must not God-beams be able to do for the receiving soul*!' (*Pulsford*). If sunshine can fill our hearts with gladness, what joy will Saviour-shine bring into our spirit! The Holy Spirit's influence is just the shining of God's love upon us, in the face of Jesus Christ!

Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
One God in Persons Three,
Bring back the heavenly blessing, lost
By all mankind and me.

Eternal Sun of righteousness,
Display Thy beams divine,
And cause the glories of Thy face
Upon my heart to shine. (*C. Wesley.*)

II. Light as a Symbol of the Work of the Holy Spirit.

The chief ministry of light is to reveal, to illuminate. So the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, enlightening the eyes of the heart (Eph. i. 17). On the one hand, He reveals to us our own helplessness; and on the other, the saving grace of our God.

(i.) He shows us our helpless condition—'our emptiness and woe.'

Naturally, we think of ourselves as full of goodness and strength, as being rich and having need of nothing. He shows us that we are wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked! We cannot explain how it comes about, but one day we look upon ourselves with great complacency and self-satisfaction, whilst on the next day we see ourselves in a way that fills us with shame and repentance. That is the work of the Spirit of Light! It is as if He put a candle into our hands, by which we can explore the dark cavern of the heart, and with horror see it full of noisome reptiles and things of darkness.

> The Holy Ghost showed me the spirituality of the law in such a manner that I saw and felt my inward parts were very wickedness. I wondered that I was so great a monster. (*Matthias Joyce, early Methodist preacher,* 1754–1814.)

Even when the heart tries to cleanse itself from gross evil, He shows us its vile ingratitude in refusing to trust and love and serve Him who died for our sakes. (Read John xvi. 9.) Thus He gives

' that blessed sense of guilt ' and self-despair ' which drives us to the only door that is open,' to the only Saviour. This sense of our need of Christ is ' the Spirit's rising beam,' His first ray of illumination.

(ii.) He reveals to us, next, ' the paths of life ' where God's children walk.

The ' Spirit of Truth ' becomes our constant and life-long Guide (John xvi. 13).

1. *The path of salvation.* (Read Luke i. 78–79.) The promise of this text is fulfilled in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. The way of peace is Christ, and it is the work of the Holy Ghost to point out the way—to reveal Christ to us (John xvi. 14).

Joseph Hart, the writer of the glorious hymn which begins, ' Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,' relates how, after a life of sin, he was led suddenly into the way of peace, in Fetter Lane Chapel about 1757, whilst listening to a sermon on Rev. iii. 10. He says : ' The Lord, by the Spirit of His love, came, not in a visionary manner into my brain, but with such divine power and energy into my soul that I was lost in blissful amazement. I cried out, " What ! me, Lord ? " His Spirit answered in me, " Yes, thee ! I pardon thee, fully and freely." ' He declares that it was as if a crushing burden were lifted at once from his soul.

Some are not converted in this sense of a marked ' turning round,' but rather in the sense of ' finding peace ' according to the beautiful phrase once so much in use. Even so only the Spirit's light can guide us to the treasure. ' No man can say that Jesus is Lord but in the Holy Spirit ' (1 Cor. xii. 3).

Pray before all things that gates of light may be opened to you, for these matters are not perceived nor comprehended by any unless God and His Christ give power to understand (*Justin.*)

Spirit of faith, come down,
Reveal the things of God,
And make to us the Godhead known,
And witness with the blood.

No man can truly say
That Jesus is the Lord,
Unless Thou take the veil away,
And breathe the living word.

Then, only then, we feel
Our interest in His blood,
And cry with joy unspeakable,
Thou art my Lord, my God! (*C. Wesley.*)

2. *The path of holiness.* (Read Gal. v. 25.) To be led of the Spirit, to walk after His promptings, is the sure way of holiness. He creates within the heart aversion to sin and love of goodness, and what we have to do is to follow His guidance as it comes to us through His illumination of the Scriptures and His whispered suggestions in our hearts. 'Be wholly given up to His new-creating work; stay your mind upon it, abide with it, and expect all from it. This will be drinking at the fountain of living water, walking with God, living by faith, putting on Christ, continual hearing the Word of God, eating the Bread that came down from Heaven, supping with Christ, and following the Lamb wherever He goeth' (*W. Law*).

3. *The path of service.* It is a special function of the Spirit to guide us to our work for God. (Read Acts viii. 29; Acts xi. 12.) It is wonderful how work done at His bidding is owned of God. Such work is full of joy, even if it be difficult. He prepares the way before us, and makes hearts ready for our message. Much so-called Christian work is

barren of result because it is self-chosen, self-directed. 'The way to be a faithful and fruitful labourer in the vineyard of Christ is to stand in a full dependence on the Spirit of God, as having no good power, but as His instrument and by His influence in all that you do' (*W. Law*).

The pure Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart taught me to wait in silence until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet through which the Lord speaks to His flock. (*John Woolman.*)

4. *The path of providence.* Guidance, including rest and safety, is the Holy Spirit's gift to God's children. (Read Isa. lxiii. 11–14.) This guidance is given to us, not by putting on one side as useless the faculties by which we are naturally directed; rather, the Spirit illuminates the mind, clears the judgement, strengthens the will, purifies the conscience, so that we come to see and choose the right way. We are led in a path which, if not at first, gradually shows itself as the plain road of duty. This guidance, if we ask it, will be granted in every problem of life, great or small, and because of it we shall never miss our providential way. As we grow older we grow ever more certain of divine leading, if we are prepared to follow. And the Spirit's guidance is given to the very end (Ps. lxxiii. 24). God's people have ever found themselves so guided through the valley of the shadow of death.

Dr. N. Murray, as he lay dying (1861), heard the words repeated to him, 'Tis Jesus, the first and the last'; immediately, with almost his last breath, he responded, 'Whose Spirit shall guide me safe home.'

The great scientist, Sir David Brewster, who died in 1868, in his last moments said, 'I shall see Jesus, who made the world, and that will be grand. I have had the light for many years,' he whispered slowly and with emphasis, 'and oh, how bright it is! I feel so safe, so satisfied.'

Our highest wisdom, then, is to ask the Holy Spirit to come to us as the light, that we may not walk in darkness, but may have the light of life—our prayer that of à Kempis:

> Guard, save Thy servant's soul amid the many dangers of a life that soon decays,
> And with Thy favouring influence to keep him company, guide him along the road of peace unto his native country of everlasting light.

II

Fire

Come as the fire! and purge our hearts
  Like sacrificial flame:
Let our whole soul an offering be
  To our Redeemer's name. (*Dr. A. Reed.*)

The Holy Spirit is explicitly spoken of under the symbol of fire in Matt. iii. 11 and Acts ii. 3, and thus is fulfilled the Scripture which foretold Him as the 'Spirit of burning' (Isa. iv. 4). This is the fire which Christ came to earth to kindle (Luke xii. 49).

I. The Significance of the Symbol.

There are two sides to it. Fire represents the divine nature as it flames against sin to consume it (Heb. xii. 29). This is the fire of God's anger. But there is also the fire of His love. We may have the fire of sunshine, or the cheery fire of the hearth, or the fire which melts away the dross as well as the fire of the conflagration which burns and destroys. It is this beneficent ministry of fire which symbolizes the Spirit of God. The emblem speaks to us of the divine love kindled in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, the love that purifies and cleanses. The very same word is used (Acts ii. 33) to describe the outpouring of the Spirit which is employed (Rom. v. 5) to express His shedding abroad of love in our hearts: evidently the gift of the Spirit and of love are one and the same.

The Spirit is Himself the love of God : and when He is given to a man He kindles in him the fire of love to God and his neighbour. (*Augustine.*)

So Charles Wesley speaks of the ' flame of sacred love,' and likens ' all-victorious love ' to the refining fire of the Holy Spirit. ' The same idea is expressed by the common phrases of every language. We talk about the warmth of affection, the blaze of enthusiasm, the fire of emotion. Christians are to be set on fire of God ' : that is, the celestial flame of love is to burn intensely in their hearts. The Spirit's baptism of fire is His baptism of love.

Thy Holy Spirit, Lord, alone
Can deeper love inspire,
His power alone within our souls
Can light the sacred fire. (*Blair.*)

II. The Appropriateness of the Symbol.

How vividly it describes the effects of Divine love kindled in our cold hearts by the Holy Ghost !

(i.) Fire is purifying.

It is only by fire that we can separate the dross from the precious metal ; and fire, better than anything, can destroy the impurities which are the cause of disease.

It is said that the Great Plague of London (1665) lingered and kept bursting out until the city was thoroughly purified by the great Fire of London (1666), the heat of which not only destroyed the germs of disease, but so penetrated and warmed the soil that unknown flowers sprang from long and deeply buried seeds !

What power like that of love, even in the natural order, can cleanse the heart from selfishness? See how a mother's love for her child, or a husband's for his wife, can refine away self-will and self-love. Even so, but more mightily, the love of God, imparted by His Spirit, can 'purge the heart, like sacrificial flame.' (Read Isa. iv. 3–4, Isa. vi. 6–7.)

As iron put into the fire loseth its rust and becometh altogether white and glowing, so he that wholly turneth himself unto God putteth off all slothfulness and is transformed into a new man. (*à Kempis.*)

Only the blood of Christ can wash away the guilt of the past, and only the fiery influence of the Holy Ghost can make and keep us pure from the habit of sin. 'The way to cleanse a soul is to do with it as they do with foul clay: thrust it into the fire, and that will burn all the blackness out of it.'

My heart was quite changed: God was there: from that moment He had given me an experience of His presence in my soul. I was all of a sudden so altered that I was hardly to be known either by myself or others. I found no more those troublesome faults or that reluctance to duty which formerly characterized me. They all disappeared, as being consumed like chaff in a great fire. (*Madame Guyon.*)

O that it now from heaven might fall,
And all my sins consume!
Come, Holy Ghost, for Thee I call,
Spirit of burning, come! (*C. Wesley.*)

Burn, burn, O Love! within my heart,
Burn fiercely night and day,
Till all the dross of earthly loves
Is burned and burned away. (*Faber.*)

(ii.) Fire is sacrificial.

(Read Lev. iii. 5.) Fire was an essential part of the Jewish sacrifices. The idea of its use was two-fold. On the one hand, it stripped the offerer of the sacrifice of his property in it, entirely destroying it; on the other, in heavenward-rising flame it bore the sacrifice to God. These two ideas are fulfilled by the fire of love in our hearts. Constrained by love, we can say, 'Let our whole soul an offering be.' Love places all we have and are on the altar; it enables us to make the continual sacrifice of our own will, in order that we may do God's will: it makes absolute surrender of self: it burns up all our self-seeking in its lambent, seven times heated fire!

A girl who worked in a mine in Cornwall was converted. Before that time she was very fond of wearing large quantities of cheap jewellery. The change in her bearing led her friends to say, 'Mary is converted.' 'No,' remarked one of them who knew her love of finery, 'she is not converted. Look at those large earrings in her ears still!' Without saying a word she took out the ornaments and broke them into pieces with her hammer. Then she sang exultantly:

Neither passion nor pride
Thy Cross can abide,
But melt in the fountain that streams from Thy side.

Her pride was consumed in the flame of love to Christ. (See *Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated*, Hymn 519.)

The sacrifices of love are made to 'our Redeemer's Name,' and for His sake. Love carries up our offering in aspiring flames to Jesus. Self-denial, for its own sake, or asceticism, if without love to Christ, is a barren thing. It is this tincture, 'For Christ's sake,' that turns all to gold.

When St. Augustine read the passage where it says 'That no man can see God's face and live,' he exclaimed 'Then let me die, if only I may see Thy face.' (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*)

It is when we are ready to die to self because of our love to our Saviour, that self-mortification brings us blessing.

(iii.) The work of the Holy Spirit as fire is the Church's supreme need.

'Where among us are to be found lives blazing with enthusiastic devotion and earnest love? We are all icebergs compared with what we ought to be. Let each look at his own heart: is our religion flame or ice?' (*Dr. Maclaren*).

A Chinese convert was asked what China needed most. He answered, 'Men, with hot hearts, to tell us of the love of Jesus.'

Such men are needed everywhere. Oh, if every Christian had the burning heart and the 'tongue of fire,' how soon might the world be saved! Such a flame of love in us would burn its way through all difficulties, and set others on fire! This fire can only be created by the Holy Spirit as He reveals the great love of Christ and makes to glow in our heart a passionate, abiding flame of grateful and adoring love!

O Thou who camest from above
The pure, celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love,
On the mean altar of my heart! (*C. Wesley.*)

III

Dew

Come as the dew! and sweetly bless
This consecrated hour:
May barrenness rejoice to own
Thy fertilizing power! (*Dr. A. Reed.*)

Dew, as a symbol of the Spirit of God, suggests the *source*, *effect*, and *manner* of the descent of the Holy Ghost.

I. Dew is the Direct Gift of God.

It is 'from the Lord' (Gen. xxvii. 28; Isa. xxvi. 19; Micah v. 7). Although we can in part explain its origin scientifically, we know that behind all processes of Nature is the divine power. Like the dew, all spiritual blessing is 'commanded' by the Lord (Ps. cxxxiii. 2–3). Only God, who sends the dew, can 'shed forth' the Holy Spirit. Hence we must look to God in Christ for the descent and gift of the Spirit. Too often we look to other sources for this blessing. We fix our hope on a favourite preacher, on a popular book of devotion, on the reading of the Word of God, or on a special devotional meeting. But these are only channels of grace. The Holy Spirit may indeed come to us through them, but only our Lord can send the Divine Presence flowing through the means. We must, therefore, in expectant prayer, look through the means of grace to the Lord of all grace, and fix our hope on Him alone.

II. Dew is a 'Fertilizing Power' (Hos. xiv. 5–7).

Especially in Eastern lands, where there is no rain for months together, is the influence of dew upon vegetation important: without it, those lands would become deserts. So the Holy Spirit brings fruitfulness into our hearts and lives. When His influence is richly given there is abundance of fruit (Gal. v. 22–23). Barrenness rejoices when the spiritual dew falls upon it, and the arid wilderness blossoms as the rose!

1. This is true of the *individual.* Read the beautiful picture of Job's useful and unselfish life (Job xxix.), a life full of blessing to the poor and needy. What was the cause of his fruitfulness? The 'secret of God' (v. 4) was upon him; or, as he explains it, 'The dew lay all night upon my branch' (v. 19). So to be baptized with the holy dew of the Spirit, to be 'filled' with His life-giving energy, will make us to abound in 'celestial fruit.' Then our characters will show 'lovely tempers, fruits of grace,' and our lives will stretch out hundreds of branches laden with food for the hungry!

John Woolman, the Quaker (1720-1772), writes in his *Journal*, 'The next day I was at Buckingham meeting, where, through the descendings of heavenly dew, my mind was comforted and drawn into a near unity with the flock of Christ.' So the 'fruit of the Spirit' was brotherly love.

'As the rain that descends from heaven and makes the earth to blossom shows white in the lily, red in the rose, purple in the violet and hyacinth, and clothes itself in forms so different as those of the date-palm and the vine, so the Holy Spirit, though Himself one and indivisible, distributes His grace as He wills. The soul that receives it bears in all cases the fruits of righteousness, yet not the same fruits.' (*Cyril of Jerusalem.*)

If we desire that our hearts should be as gardens filled with fruit and flowers and fragrance, our prayer must be:

My stock lies dead, and no increase
Doth my dull husbandry improve;
O let Thy graces, without cease,
Drop from above!

The dew doth ev'ry morning fall:
And shall the dew outstrip Thy dove?
The dew, for which grass cannot call,
Drop from above! (*Herbert.*)

2. The dew of the Spirit will make the *Church* fruitful in kind deeds and conversions. Too often the Church bears fruit little in quantity and poor in quality, grapes which are not sweet and ripe and large, but small and shrivelled and hard, 'more like marbles.'

At Killin, in Perthshire, grew a famous vine. It filled the whole glass-house, 170 feet long, and in 1881 yielded nearly 2,000 bunches of luscious, full-blooded grapes—an 'empurpled growth that overhead' was like a vault of 'pendant fruit.'

Thus ought the Church, the 'vine out of Egypt,' to bear 'much fruit' (John xv. 8; Phil. i. 11). The secret of such fruitfulness is found in an abundant fall of the dew of the Holy Spirit.

III. Dew Symbolizes the Manner of the Holy Spirit's Working.

1. Dew falls *silently*. As the sun rises, as the stars shine, as trees grow, the dew distils in silence. So is it with the work of God's Spirit. Sometimes He comes with mighty, rushing sound; but His usual method is quiet and gentle. Thus He extends

His kingdom in the *world*. That kingdom often grows in stillness as does the mustard-tree, as spreads the silent leaven: it comes not 'with observation' but like 'the still dews of quietness.'

On Wednesday (March 5, 1740) came to Bristol. It was easy to observe in how different a manner God works now from what He did last spring. He then poured along like a rapid flood, overwhelming all before Him. Whereas now,

> He deigns His influence to infuse,
> Secret, refreshing as the silent dews.

Convictions sink deeper and deeper. Love and joy are more calm, even, and steady. (*John Wesley's Journal.*)

Often He is influencing the hearts of those we love, when we see no sign, and hear no sound of His presence. Thus, too, He carries on His sanctifying work in the *individual* Christian. If we are truly the Lord's, His grace is ripening our spiritual life, which grows like a pure, white lily, without a sound to attract our notice. Our friends see it, our God sees it; but we never suspect how steadily the quiet loveliness of our life has increased.

> Then bless thy secret growth, nor catch
> At noise, but live unseen and dumb:
> Seek life, bear fruit, be clean, and watch
> Until the white-winged reapers come.
> (*Henry Vaughan.*)

> Silent Spirit, dwell with me,
> I, myself, would quiet be;
> Quiet as the growing blade,
> That through earth its way has made:
> Silently, like morning light,
> Putting mists and chills to flight. (*T. T. Lynch.*)

2. Dew is *opportune*. 'The fiercer the heat of day, the heavier the dew at night.' Thus is it with the influence of the Divine Comforter. We may pray, in full certainty of an answer :

> When my sorrows most increase,
> Let Thy strongest joys be given.

Miss Havergal said truly that God's 'mores' are always in perfect proportion and correspondence : more temptation and more strength, more work and more help, more sorrow and more comfort, more trial and more grace, more affliction and more glory !

3. Dew may be *hindered* in its descent. If you look at a meadow in the early morning, you see at intervals little shields or tiny lakes of silver, as it were, lying on the grass : they are spiders' webs all pearled with shining dew, which they have caught ere it reached the ground : beneath the web the grass is comparatively dry ! So a veil of unbelief, or a tissue of unkind thoughts or feelings lying over the heart keeps the dew of the Holy Spirit from falling upon it, and intercepts His blessing. Some of the things which hinder the Holy Spirit's work upon our souls are named in Eph iv. 29–32. 'You rarely find dew after a windy night,' said Lord Tennyson, when he wished to show how profitless is controversy : there is little blessing of the Spirit's influence on those who indulge in heated argument, and none on those who give way to strife. Perhaps it is but a subtle and scarcely perceptible sin which prevents the dewy baptism of grace. Just now the Church of Christ mourns a great lack of conversions. What keeps back the blessing ?

On September 25, 1764, a Quaker minister, John Smith, said in a meeting of Friends in Philadelphia, 'That he had been a member of Society upwards of sixty years, and that in the early times there was much tenderness and contrition in their meetings. That gradually the Society, increasing in wealth, conformed to the fashions of the world, in some degree, and that the powerful overshadowings of the Holy Ghost became less manifest in it. That the weakness which hath now overspread the Society, and the barrenness manifested among us, is matter of much sorrow.'

Is this a picture of the Church to-day? Is conformity to the world, in its love of money or pleasure, like a web woven by Satan, intercepting the dew of the Holy Spirit? Let us sweep away any such web from our own hearts! Then pray,

> Like the dew Thy peace distil:
> Guide, subdue our wayward will,
> Things of Christ unfolding still,
> Comforter Divine.

IV

The Dove

Come as the dove! and spread Thy wings,
The wings of peaceful love:
And let Thy church on earth become
Blest as the church above. (*Dr. A. Reed.*)

The dove is perhaps the most beautiful of all the symbols of the Holy Spirit. It is suggested, as we shall see, in the opening words of the Bible as they describe the Creation: it was specially chosen by God to mark the Spirit's presence at the beginning of Christ's ministry, at His baptism: it has from earliest times been a favourite symbol of the Spirit with sacred poets.

As the wings of doves over their nestlings . . . so are the wings of the Spirit over my heart. (*Odes of Solomon.*)

The dove symbolizes both His *nature* and *operations*.

I. The Nature of the Holy Ghost.

'The dove is a gentle creature. It loves the calm retreat, the silent shade,' the stillness of the quiet forest glade (Ps. lv. 6). Thus the Spirit of God is peace-loving. He is described in the hymn quoted above as spreading out 'wings of peaceful love,' and in other hymns as God's 'mild, pacific dove,' and as a 'sweet messenger of rest.' He

cannot dwell in any heart or in any Church which is filled with the noise and clamour of sin and strife and ill-will. 'The Holy Spirit's finer nature is tender and sensitive and calls for an atmosphere of gentleness and peace' (*Tertullian*). 'Like Noah's dove this blessed Spirit goes to and fro, but finds no rest where the waves of passion are surging over the heart of man, and therefore, grieved, returns to Him who sent Him forth. The battle-field attracts the vulture, not the dove' (*Norton*). His presence brings peace to every heart: every Church where His peace is found is 'blest as the Church above.' We must cast out all passion and anger and discord, if we would have the Spirit of God as the Dove deep 'nestling in our hearts.'

Whence Thou hast come I need not ask:
But, dear and gentle Dove!
Oh, wherefore hast Thou lit on one
That so repays Thy love?

Thy home is with the humble, Lord!
The simple are Thy rest;
Thy lodging is in childlike hearts;
Thou makest there Thy nest.

Dear Comforter! Eternal Love!
If Thou wilt stay with me,
Of lowly thoughts and simple ways
I'll build a nest for Thee.

How silver-like Thy plumage is,
Thy voice, how grave, how gay!
Ah me! how I shall miss Thee, Lord!
Then promise me to stay.

Who made this beating heart of mine,
But Thou, my heavenly Guest?
Let no one have it then but Thee,
And let it be Thy nest. (*Faber.*)

II. The Work of the Holy Spirit.

(i.) The Dove is life-giving.

She broods over her nest until it is filled with the life of her young. So we are told that the Spirit of God 'brooded' upon the face of the waters (Gen. i. 2, R.V., margin). 'The Spirit of God came and fell upon the waters, cherishing the whole, and communicating a prolific and vivific quality unto it, as a dove gently moves itself upon its eggs until it hath communicated vital heat unto them' (*Owen*). All *natural* life is the work of the Holy Ghost. 'Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit: they are created' (Ps. civ. 30); 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth' (John vi. 63); 'The Spirit is life' (Rom. viii. 10); 'The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the world' (Wisdom i. 7). 'Wherever the Spirit is, there is also life: and wherever life is, there is also the Holy Spirit' (*St. Ambrose*). 'The Spirit of God which moved on the face of the waters is the vital and vitalizing power which is immanent in the creation, and answers to the soul in man' (*Theophilus of Antioch*). 'The pulses of His presence beat throughout the whole range of the natural world. The laws of Nature are the Spirit's methods. Nature is the robe of the Spirit of God' (*V. Staley*). God the Spirit is immanent in all the works of His hands. How, then, dare we destroy beautiful flowers or trees without need, or be cruel to the insects or animals, in which dwells the presence of the Holy Ghost? 'There is no creature so small and mean that it representeth not the goodness of God' (*à Kempis*, ii. 4). All *religious* life is the Spirit's work. As He brought 'life and light and peace,' brooding over the rude

chaos of the formless and void earth and its deep, dead, and dark waters, so He can bring life to the heart, dead in sin, and holiness to its unfathomable deeps of wickedness!

> Expand Thy wings, celestial Dove,
> Brood o'er our nature's night:
> On our disordered spirits move,
> And let there now be light. (*C. Wesley.*)

(ii.) The dove once brought an 'earnest' of salvation.

(Read Gen. viii. 10–11.) The olive-leaf which the dove bore to Noah was a tiny specimen of earth's beauty, which told that the world was again a place of loveliness and safety—an 'earnest,' a proof that the earth still existed as man's abode and home. Thus the Holy Dove, the Spirit of God, brings to every penitent heart a leaf from the Tree of Life which stands in the Paradise of Heaven—a sure demonstration that there is a heaven. 'To us, sailing over a dismal sea, He comes bearing a message that tells of the fair garden of God, in which the blessed shall walk.' We know without any question that

> Sweet fields, beyond the swelling flood,
> Stand dressed in living green,

when the Spirit of God brings some spray of their 'never-withering flowers' into the hand of our faith! We are certain of heaven when we have a fragment of it in our hearts! The Spirit of God is called 'the earnest of our inheritance' (Eph. i. 14). The idea of an 'earnest' is that we receive a portion of that inheritance which is to be ours altogether, as a proof of its existence, as a specimen

of its quality, and a pledge that we shall in due course receive it. What is heaven? It is love, joy, and holiness, all in perfection. It is unbroken communion with our Saviour. In some degree the Spirit of God, here and now, gives us these blessings in our heart—foretastes and an 'earnest' of what we shall receive by-and-by! Although we cannot tell what heaven's habits and occupations may be, we know a great deal of its blessedness already, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

> The men of grace have found
> Glory begun below.

Even now, while the form and outline of our heavenly habitations are strange to us, the imperishable essence of the bliss of heaven is familiar to us!

> We cannot define either the shape or colour of this, God's glorious rose; we only know it through its fragrance, unfolding in the regenerate soul of man. We cannot paint this flower, yet love and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost convey within our hearts a subtle sense of its odour, and instruct us in the highest secrets of heaven. (*Dora Greenwell.*)

The 'earnest' of heaven is truly described by Henry Vaughan as

> Gladness and peace, and hope, and love,
> The secret favours of the Dove.

And the Spirit waits to give these in larger measure, as we pray:

> Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
> With all Thy quickening powers:
> Come shed abroad the Saviour's love,
> And that shall kindle ours. (*Watts.*)

Come, holy, celestial Dove,
To visit a sorrowful breast,
My burden of guilt to remove,
And bring me assurance and rest. (*C. Wesley.*)

(iii.) The Dove, at the baptism of Christ, was a proof, or seal of Divine Sonship.

(Matt. iii. 16–17; Mark i. 10–11; Luke iii. 22; John i. 32.) The baptism of Christ may be regarded as His ordination for His great work. At that moment He bade farewell to His carpenter's task, and was publicly separated to His ministry.

'Now,' says St. Luke very explicitly, 'it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him.'

The wood was thick with the dim twilight as they came
Up from the water. With his clasped hands
Laid on his breast, th' Apostle silently
Followed his Master's steps, when lo! a light,
Bright as the tenfold glory of the sun,
Yet lambent as the softly burning stars,
Envelop'd them, and from the heavens away
Parted the dim blue ether like a veil;
And as a voice, fearful exceedingly,
Broke from the midst, 'This is my much loved Son,
In whom I am well pleased,' a snow-white dove
Floating upon its wings, descended through:
And shedding a swift music from its plumes
Circled, and fluttered to the Saviour's breast. (*Willis.*)

Why should not the Spirit of God who is immanent in every dove, the secret of its life, use a dove as the vehicle and sign of His approving presence? Christ and the Baptist knew its spiritual significance. This assurance of divine favour gave our Lord courage to pursue His work, however men

might hate Him. This descent of the Spirit filled Him with the dove-like qualities of gentleness and patience which made His supreme fitness for His service to men. (Read Isa. xlii. 2–3.) The scene is a parable of every Christian's experience. He goes down into the 'fountain open for sin,' and is made clean by 'the washing of regeneration,' through faith in Jesus. Then a Voice speaks to him, in his inmost soul, assuring him that he is a child of God, well-pleasing in the Father's sight (Rom. viii. 16). Nor does the Dove of God fail in that hour of blessing; but the Spirit, taking up his abode in the heart, fills it with harmlessness and gentleness and peace, that the child of God may be fitted for loving service.

A well-known writer tells how a hard, selfish, cruel man, Moses Fletcher by name, was truly converted, and became kind and loving. If the incident is not a literal fact the lesson is strictly true. He was baptized by immersion, on confessing his new experience. 'As he stepped out of the waters a cloud passed from before the October sun, and a flood of light poured through the open window of the chapel, while a white dove from a neighbouring farm perched for a moment on the wooden sill. A child in the congregation turned to her father and said, "Yonder is the bird, father, but I don't hear the voice." "What voice?" whispered the father. "Why, father, you know—'This is my beloved Son.'" But Moses heard that voice in his heart.' (*Lancashire Idylls: Mather.*)

Who can describe the joy of him who thus is conscious that God's Dove rests upon him?

May the Holy Spirit, 'as the Dove,' descend upon us all, to find a home in every heart! May the voice of Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, assure us that we are God's well-beloved children!

The opening heavens around me shine,
With beams of sacred bliss,
When Jesus shows His mercy mine,
And whispers I am His. (*Watts.*)

But will this joy abide, this bliss remain? Shall we get help from John i. 32? 'It *abode* upon Him.' 'That is what we long for! And do you see that in this connexion the Spirit came as the Dove? Have you ever studied the love of a mother bird, brooding over her nest? Utterly undisturbed, motionless, ready to starve sooner than to leave the undeveloped life. Is there anything so restless as a bird, never still one moment, and yet when the mother bird settles on her nest, nothing moves her. What does she settle down for? To foster the latent life. God gives her that instinct, and He who gave it is waiting to settle down, down deep upon your heart to nurse the life of Christ. Will you let Him? Will you so receive Him, restfully, unhindered, to do that work of forming Christ in your life which shall glorify Him? Will you watch with great heedfulness against anything which would grieve Him away' (*Miss Trotter*).

Heavenly, all-alluring Dove,
Shed Thy overshadowing love,
Love, the sealing Grace impart,
Dwell within our single heart. (*C. Wesley.*)

V

The Wind

Come as the wind! with rushing sound
And pentecostal grace!
That all of woman born may see
The glory of Thy face. (*Dr. A. Reed.*)

The wind, invisible, immaterial, mysterious, known to us only by its effects, is a wonderfully appropriate symbol of the Holy Ghost. It is remarkable that both in Hebrew and Greek the word for Spirit has the same significance, breath or wind. The very name Holy Spirit implies the emblem of the wind. It is a symbol on which the Bible lays special emphasis. In studying it our thoughts are guided, not by imagination of our own, but by explicit Scriptural illustration. It is a symbol of *power* and of *mystery*.

I. A Symbol of Power.

(I.) The wind is an emblem of the power of the Spirit of God as giving spiritual life (Ezekiel xxxvii. 1–14).

As we read Ezekiel's words we see at once a weird picture. It is a gloomy valley, the arena, perhaps, of an ancient battle. On every side lie human bones, bleached by the sun, washed by the rain, scattered abroad by the feet of wild animals—a scene of death! It is a picture-parable, depicting the state of Israel, overthrown by her enemies, scattered in exile, and, as a nation, powerless and dead. But as we read further we see the prophet enter this abode of

desolation, the only living figure! He cries aloud to the vast congregation of the dead and, at his word, the bones come together, each to its place in a human frame, and then are clothed with flesh, but the bodies still lie inert and lifeless on the ground. Now the prophet cries to God in prayer and the Divine Breath fills each body with life—'they lived and stood upon their feet an exceeding great army' (v. 10). It is a picture and prophecy of the gathering of the exiles into a great, powerful, living nation.

This resuscitation of a dead nation is a perfect symbol of a great revival of religion, in which multitudes of sinners, 'dead in trespasses and sins,' are quickened into life by the Breath of the Holy Ghost.

1. *The 'dry bones' are a striking simile of large communities of men, dead to religion.* The world is itself a valley of such 'dry bones!' On every side we see great numbers who are dead to spiritual truth. The picture is specially descriptive of the times in which we live. Speaking of the religious state of England at the rise of Methodism, Archbishop Secker says: 'In this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard for religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age.' Such a period appears again to have arisen in our country. All Churches bear witness to decreasing congregations; the Sabbath day is more and more a day of pleasure-seeking: the claims of Christ are increasingly ignored: the spirit of indifference to divine things is rapidly covering the land like a dark pall. There is, surely, need of a

divine visitation of revival. When we are asked, 'Can these bones live?' we are, like the prophet, almost afraid to answer. As we look at the sad condition of our national life we are ready to say, 'No!' But as we look at the power of the Holy Spirit we thankfully answer, 'Yes!' Through the power of the Spirit even hearts of stone begin to beat!

2. *We are shown, in Ezekiel's vision, how dead souls are raised to life.* (1) 'The word of the Lord' must be prophesied or preached (v. 4). The simple plain preaching of the 'truth as it is in Jesus' is absolutely necessary. 'Only when God takes to warming the world by icebergs will He convert souls by moral essays and social discussions!' Sincere and earnest evangelical preaching will draw men together, will influence them, will quicken conscience, will prepare them for the miracle of the New Birth. But preaching by itself can give no life; there may be crowds of interested hearers who have the semblance of life, but in whom 'there is no breath.' (2) The life-giving Breath must be sought in prayer. We must call for the wind of God (v. 9), 'That wind from the four corners of the heavens is but a symbol of the universal life-giving Spirit of God' (v. 14). He alone can fill the soul with the Breath of life and bid the sleeper rise out of the grave of spiritual death (v. 12). Such manifestations of His saving power He grants from time to time to His Church, in glorious revivals, when a community, or a great portion of it, is filled with new life.

Such was the Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century, and such was the great revival of 1857–8. No such work of grace is free from imperfections, since the human actors are never perfect; but these are genuine works of the

Holy Spirit on the world. Christian people should never cease to count upon such large movements of the gracious Spirit It would seem indispensable to the divine work of renewing the world : not only that individuals be renewed, but that masses of men be moved to godliness ; and the power that alone is adequate thus to move them is that of the Holy Spirit. (*W. N. Clarke, D.D.*)

Such mighty visitations come as the result of holy lives and believing prayer on the part of Christ's servants. We greatly need such a revival to-day. 'One sermon once converted 3,000 men : now it takes 3,000 sermons to convert one man.'

O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days and in the old time before them. O Lord, arise, help *us*, and deliver *us*, for Thine honour !

(ii.) The wind is an emblem of the Holy Spirit, as giving power for Christian service.

Read the Saviour's command (Luke xxiv. 49). Read also the fulfilment of His promise (Acts ii. 1–4).

The mighty, rushing wind is the symbol of the power of the Holy Ghost. Invested with the promised strength the disciples became mighty 'witnesses' for Christ, whose testimony availed to the salvation of thousands. That they might be such effective 'witnesses' was the chief purpose of the pentecostal blessing (Acts i. 8). The gift borne on the 'wind' was 'the tongues of fire.' The question whether the 'other tongues' mean distinct languages, as is generally supposed, or merely different dialects of the common Greek speech of that time would form a separate study. It is worth noting that the word rendered 'language' in Revised Version (Acts ii. 8) is διάλεκτος, suggesting that the latter interpretation is correct. The further problem as

to the relation these 'tongues' on the Day of Pentecost bore to the 'gift of tongues' named in the Corinthian epistles calls for a consideration that we cannot now undertake. The evidence appears to us to indicate that the 'gift of tongues' in the primitive Church did not mean speaking in a strange language, but was an ecstatic utterance, unintelligible to all, save through an interpreter—mere sound without words. The essential point is that the Holy Spirit gives 'utterance' (Acts ii. 4) to those who receive Him, so that all who are addressed hear 'in their own tongue,' i.e. in a way they understand, and with a mysterious influence that compels their attention, 'the mighty works of God.' The Spirit still bestows the 'tongue of fire,' the power of speaking for Christ in words that burn their way to the heart.

> We ask not, Lord, Thy cloven flame,
> Or tongues of various tone:
> But long Thy praises to proclaim
> With fervour in our own. (*Heber.*)

The same power of the Spirit, qualifying for 'witness-bearing' is available for every Christian to-day. 1. The *preacher* may have it. Some have, like Peter, to 'stand up,' and in ordered discourse set forth the claim of Christ. The only secret of soul-saving preaching is that they should be 'filled with the Spirit' and speak with the 'tongue of fire.' Thus it was in apostolic times, and since that day every mighty preacher has been in close contact with the resources of the Divine Power. See, for example, the lives of the early Methodist preachers, of Jonathan Edwards, Finney, William Taylor, Moody.

The 'enduement of power' does not come in a stereotyped way to which all must conform to gain it, and it works along the lines of a man's natural gift. But it is the supreme qualification for the preacher of the gospel.

New Testament preaching began when the tongues of fire rested on the assembled Church. The Kingdom is not to be spread abroad by natural means, not by eloquence, not by oratory, not by wisdom of words. It is to win its way through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is only when the teaching takes fire, only when it burns and brightens with a divine influence, that outcast men draw near and fall at the feet of God. (*W. R. Nicoll.*)

When I was preaching in Chicago I never worked harder to prepare my sermons than I did then. I preached and preached, but it was beating against the air. Oh, my desire was that I might have a fresh anointing. One day, in New York, it seemed as if I felt a strange and mighty power coming over me. I went to my hotel and wept before God: He gave me such fullness that it seemed more than I could contain. May God forgive me if I should speak in a boastful way, but I do not know that I have preached a sermon since but God has given me some soul. (*Moody.*)

2. The power for witnessing is the birthright of *every believer.* It will qualify him to witness for Christ by speech on all fit occasions. The 'tongue of fire' sat on *each* disciple: they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost. It has been suggested that the tongues of fire sat only on the twelve apostles. But surely in the light of Acts ii. 17–18, this can only be regarded as a perversion of exposition to buttress the doctrine of 'Apostolical succession.' The number of disciples was 120; leaving out Peter there were 119, and it was largely the work of the

119 which won converts every day (v. 46). If all believers were full of the Holy Spirit we should see strange and blessed sights. Men, slow of speech, would quietly and tenderly persuade their friends to accept Christ: timid women would, as God opened the way, speak winsomely for Jesus: parents would wisely and effectually recommend Christ to their children: all would, according to gift and opportunity, be able to speak a word for Jesus, bearing witness as to their own experience of His love. Such simple, modest, yet faithful witnessing, is the world's greatest need to-day. 'Every Christian is under a subpoena to appear, and must be ready when called upon.' The enduement of the Spirit's power will enable us to witness for Christ by the testimony of conduct, when there is no opportunity of speech. It was the lovely lives of the early Christians, as well as their words, which commended Christ to the people (Acts ii. 43–47). 'A good farm is the best witness to a farmer: a good painting to an artist: a good book to the author: cures are the best witnesses to a doctor': transfigured and Christlike lives are Christ's most effective witnesses! The 'fullness of the Spirit' secures such lives. 'As the tide, when it rises, fills all the nooks and bays, lifting every ship higher, so the Spirit, when one is filled with His influence, comes into all departments of life'—the home, the business, and pleasure. The cleansing, purifying wind is the emblem of the 'Spirit of Holiness.'

Breathe on me, Breath of God:
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do. (*E. Hatch.*)

II. A Symbol of the Mysteriousness of the Holy Spirit's Work (John iii. 8).

In these words our Lord teaches that in every case of the 'new birth' we may see, in the course of the wind, a counterpart of the Spirit's operation. In each case there is mystery which we cannot understand.

1. The wind illustrates the mystery of regeneration by *its independence of the human will.* 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' Man cannot dictate the course of the wind, or lay down its path, or steer its tremendous forces: it defies his puny power. Even so, man cannot compel the Holy Spirit, or force Him to create the soul anew (John i. 13). It is true He will come in answer to the call of believing prayer, but He must be sought reverently, humbly. He blesses not because He must, but because He loves to help those who ask Him. Our salvation depends on His sovereign will. The soul seeking salvation must come to this point—to yield, to be passive, to be as clay in the hands of the potter, to surrender the will to God, to lose one's life. Then the Spirit will fill the soul with His power.

As this young guard journeyed underground from the Bank to Shepherd's Bush, he heard a voice as distinctly as ever he heard sound in his life, which said, 'It is your fault, not God's, that you cannot be saved. You *won't trust.*' He surrendered then. Directly this complete surrender of his mind followed upon the voice he was aware instantly of an extraordinary peace. It was as if a tempest of hail and snow had become instantly a summer day. 'I only knew,' he says, 'that I was saved.' The man was completely changed. The passion for drink, the rage which had made him a demon, his hatred of life, passed

out of his life as if they had never been there; he was filled with delightsome joy. (*'A Tight Handful': Broken Earthenware, by H. Begbie.*)

2. The wind illustrates the New Birth in that *each is known by its effects.* We hear the 'sound of the wind,' now, like low music as it murmurs among the grasses and reeds; now, like an organ-peal, surging in the woods; now, like the thunder, roaring amid the mountains, or across the storm-tossed ocean; but in itself it is invisible! 'So is *every one* that is born of the Spirit.' The presence of the Spirit is known in each child of God by its effects, and by them alone. The Holy Ghost Himself we cannot know, but His 'voice,' the results of His work, the 'fruit' of His grace are clearly to be seen. What is the 'sound' of this Holy Breath? It is 'goodness, righteousness, and truth' (Eph. v. 9).

He rose from his knees a changed man. From being cruel he became tender as a woman. From being a cunning thief he became scrupulously honest. From being a loafer he became an industrious workman. From being basely selfish he became considerate for others. 'The greatest change in Danny,' said a friend who knows him well, 'is his gentleness. He couldn't hurt a fly.' What a revolution! What a new birth!' (*'A Copper Basher': Broken Earthenware, by H. Begbie.*)

3. The wind is an emblem of the *secrecy of the coming* of the Holy Spirit. We know not 'whence the wind cometh nor whither it goeth'—where was its cradle, or where will be its grave, as it sinks to rest.

I am sitting on a summer's day in the shadow of a great New England elm. There is not breeze enough to move

its long motionless branches. All at once comes a faint murmur: the leaves are moved by a gentle current of air; the leaves are all in motion, and a soft, rushing sound fills my ear. So with every one that is born of the Spirit. I am in a state of spiritual lethargy, and scarcely know how to think one good thought. I am heart-empty, and there comes, I know not where or whence, a sound of the Divine Presence. I am inwardly moved with new comfort and hope. I am walking in the Spirit. I am comforted with the comfort of God. (*J. Freeman Clarke.*)

All the works of God are mysterious—the growing of a flower, the dawning of the day, the beating of a human heart. They are mysterious just because they are divine. But whilst the work of the Spirit passes understanding it does not, thank God, pass experience and glorious realization in our hearts!

True Wind of heaven, from south to north
For joy or chastening, blow;
The garden-spices shall spring forth
If Thou wilt bid them flow.

O Holy Ghost, of sevenfold might
All graces come from Thee:
Grant us to know and serve aright,
One God in Persons three. (*Sir H. W. Baker.*)

VI

'Rivers of Living Water'

Jesus, the gift divine I know,
The gift divine I ask of Thee:
That living water now bestow,
Thy Spirit and Thyself, on me:
Thou, Lord, of life the Fountain art,
Now let me find Thee in my heart. (*C. Wesley.*)

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believed on Him were to receive (*John vii.* 37–39 R.V.).

So beautiful and appropriate is water as an emblem of the Holy Spirit that it is often used in Scripture, either in express words or by implication, to symbolize His work, a truth to which Christ refers in His phrase—'as the Scripture hath said.' For instance, as His grace is to quench the heart's thirst it is likened by Isaiah (xii. 3), and by our Lord, to a *well* (John iv. 14). His blessing makes the Church and each believer fruitful in holiness, and so it is symbolized by *rain* (Heb. vi. 7), which is so copious that it is said to come in *floods* (Isa. xliv. 3). Hence in the promise of Pentecost (Joel ii. 28), and in its fulfilment (Acts ii. 33), the Spirit is described as being '*poured out*,' as rain may be, to suggest the abundance of the gift (Titus iii. 6). It is computed that round our earth hang in the

clouds 54,460 billions of tons of vapour, ready to fall in rain, fit type of the glorious fullness of the Spirit's grace awaiting the prayer of faith to descend in 'showers of blessing.' Like water, once more, the Holy Ghost has power to cleanse (Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27), and, most important of all the symbols, the water of baptism is a figure of the '*washing* (lit. *bath*) of regeneration' (Titus iii. 5; John iii. 5); we must, however, remember that the water is but a sign; the cleansing is by the Holy Ghost alone.

In the emblem we are specially to consider Christ compares the Holy Spirit to *rivers*. 'The Spirit is called *living water*, because He is ever at work: no fountain gushes forth more freely, never ceasing, never running dry or stopping in its course. The Lord speaks of *rivers*, not of a river, to show the unspeakable variety of the Spirit's operations' (*Chrysostom*). Each believer in the Saviour 'receives' from Him a full supply of the Spirit into His heart, and this gift flows out from him again in rivers of gracious influence, bringing blessing to the people around him. The life in him will overflow, and he will be a 'living watercourse,' a channel for the Spirit of God to reach and enrich others. In a lonely spot amid the hills of Scotland is a deep lake, fed by rain and dew and mountain brooks. It is just at the watershed, and at each end of the lake flows out a river, one east and the other west, each bringing fertility to the fields and dells through which it passes. This illustrates the thought in our Lord's mind. First, the believer's heart is filled with the Spirit, as a lake is made to brim with water by all the ministries of earth and sky: then, out

of this storage of the Spirit, go forth ' rivers,' in various directions, where thirsty souls may drink, and which shall make many a human desert ' blossom as the rose.'

(I.) The lake is the believer's heart ' filled with the Spirit.'

How the believer may have this more abundant life, the fullness of the Holy Ghost, Christ tells us in the passage before us. 1. There must be intense *desire* or ' *thirst* ' (v. 7). The promise is only to those who ' thirst for the life-giving stream ' : (see Isa. xliv. 3). Only those who are earnestly ' seeking for full redemption ' can hope to find the blessing.

A minister came to me and said, ' I have come for just one purpose to Northfield—to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and I would rather die than go back to my church without receiving it.' I said, ' My brother, you are going to receive it.' The following morning he came very early to my house and said, ' I have to go away on the early train, but I came to tell you before I went that I have received the baptism with the Holy Spirit.' (*Dr. Torrey.*)

2. Christ must be ' *glorified* ' (v. 39). The first meaning of this verse is, doubtless, that Christ could only give the fullness of the Spirit after His ascension. But it also teaches that we cannot receive the gift of the Holy Spirit until we ' glorify ' Him as absolute Lord and Ruler of our hearts and lives. Christ must be put on the throne of the heart as King, and all else must be dethroned. It may mean the surrender of things that are precious to us. It will mean the clearing away of all that is sinful and doubtful.

Bishop Moule and his wife once stood in the Forum at Rome. Some workmen were removing the débris which had been there for centuries. One of them with a terrific blow removed a heavy piece of débris, and a little fountain, imprisoned for 1,400 years, burst out into the sunlight, singing and living. The Holy Spirit is in us, but is checked. We must let God clear the rubbish out. (*F. B. Meyer.*)

3. The believer must *drink* the 'living water.' In other words, he must *accept* the gift of the Spirit. 'There is nothing so simple as drinking a glass of water: you place it to the lips, and simply tip the glass and take the refreshing draught.' As we accept pardon as a free gift, so we are to accept 'the promise of the Spirit through faith' (Gal. iii. 14), and 'drink of one Spirit' (1 Cor. xii. 13).

This faith is a divinely-given confidence that Christ *promises* the Spirit to the believer, that He is *able* and *willing* to fulfil His promise, that, as we trust Him to do so, He *does* give us the 'living water.'

4. Next, there must be *constant faith.* 'That he that believeth on Me' shall receive the blessing of the fullness of the Spirit, is the assurance of Christ (v. 38).

'With a lowly confidence which seems to us akin to madness, but which is commanded by God, we venture to expect that from this moment we shall experience a salvation from the power and defilement of sin, and live a life of intelligent devotion to God hitherto unknown to us' (*Dr. Beet*).

We may not be conscious at the moment of any difference, but the blessing is none the less ours as we trust the Saviour's promise. 'It is not the consciousness of power that is promised, but the power. A man of real power is always least conscious of the power in his life' (*S. D. Gordon*).

Nor can we be always having great times, but there will be a continuous inflow of the Spirit, and a constant outgoing of the 'living water.' The heart will be filled by the inflow, and will serve others by the outflow. We may be perpetually full, and always overflowing. But to realize this blessed life of influence we must exercise habitual faith in Christ.

It is the practice of one whom I know, every morning, as soon as he is conscious of returning wakefulness, just to lie quite still for three or four minutes and say, 'O holy Saviour, fill me just now with Thy Holy Spirit for this day.' (*F. B. Meyer.*)

(ii.) The 'rivers of living water' symbolize the influence of a Spirit-filled life.

Like the river in Ezekiel's vision (ch. xlvii. v. 12), which, flowing from the temple, grew ever deeper, and made everything live where it came, the influence of a holy life is a stream of blessing as it flows through the home or church or nation. 1. We do not receive 'the fullness of the Spirit' only for our own joy, but that it may be *a river bringing fertility to the lives around us.* It is not to be a stagnant pool, but a stream of 'living water,' full of life-giving power. We receive the blessing that we may bear it to others.

God fills the soul that it may pour
The fullness on another heart:
Not that the filled with good may store
The good God giveth to impart. (*W. Luff.*)

Robert Browning tells how Ferishta, before he became a holy man, went into the woods to find out God's will. He saw an eagle circling down to where a nest contained an

eaglet, into whose opened beak the mother-bird placed some food. Ferishta said, 'That is faith in God. I am going to open my mouth wide, and the Lord will fill it.' He went into the desert and opened his mouth for God to fill. He well-nigh starved. Then there came an angel, when his hope was at the lowest ebb, and said, 'Ferishta, what doest thou here?' Ferishta told the story of the eagle, and the angel, as he smiled, said, 'Oh, you are not the eaglet; you are to be the eagle. You are not to be the one who seeks only to be fed: you are to feed others.' Then came the light of the glory of God into the life of Ferishta. (*J. Stuart Holden, M.A.*)

2. The 'rivers' are sometimes *vocal* and sometimes *silent*. (1) How beautiful the music of a river as it *sings* in its rock-strewn bed! So murmurs Tennyson's 'Brook':

> I chatter over stony ways,
> In little sharps and trebles;
> I bubble into eddying bays,
> I babble on the pebbles.

There are times when our influence should flow forth in speech. 'The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook' (Prov. xviii. 4). 'Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh,' and when the soul is full of joy in Christ, there will be a testimony on the lips. If we do not confess His blessing it will soon evaporate. What we need to-day amongst Christ's disciples is more witness-bearing.

In addressing the woman of Samaria, the great Teacher described His gift of the Spirit as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. But there must be outlet as well as inflow, or the well will be little better than a

choked and stagnant cistern. The benediction brought to us by the Spirit will soon be dissipated if we treat it as a personal monopoly. The soul efficaciously inhabited by the gracious Comforter cannot be self-occupied, or absorb into its own narrow life, like a greedy, unplumbed abyss, the streaming gladness He ministers. The sweetness of vital religion will flow out of the man who truly possesses it into others, as lavishly as it comes into his own being. (*T. G. Selby.*)

The call of our age to the Church is for social service, and the need for such service is great. But only those who draw their inspiration from Christ, and who receive their strength from the indwelling Spirit can be really effective. General Booth, George Müller, Dr. Stephenson, accomplished their mighty philanthropies in the power of the Holy Ghost. So Lowell wrought for the emancipation of the slaves; he tells the story of his anointing for the work thus:

As I was speaking the whole system rose up before me like a vague destiny looming from the abyss. I never before so clearly felt the Spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me full of God. The air seemed to wave to and fro with the presence of Something, I knew not what. I spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet.

(2) At other times the river flows as a *silent* stream of character and holy deeds.

There twice a day the Severn fills:
The salt sea-water passes by
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills. (*In Memoriam.*)

Even so, sometimes, a full tide of blessing makes the life a great, silent power, spreading its own

quiet on every side. Happy the family, or the Church, through which such benignant influences glide with gentle flow!

3. Such 'rivers' of influence stream from *the humblest Christians*. The power is promised to 'any man' who thirsts and believes. Mighty rivers flowed from men like Wesley, but we too may be, in our degree, as channels of blessing. 'The healing of the world is in its nameless saints.'

James Hinton, that fine, chastened spirit, author of *The Mystery of Pain*, writes of being helped in religious matters as, depressed and alone, he sailed home from America, by the 'captain, a religious man, who conducts worship daily with the crew, and has a small religious library on board.' How little that humble ship-captain thought he was influencing one of the keenest thinkers of the last fifty years! (*G. E. Troup, M.A.*)

Madame Guyon learnt one branch of the doctrine of sanctification from a beggar on a bridge, whom she saw once, if I remember rightly, and no more. (*J. Rendel Harris.*)

Our influence may often seem lost. Our word is spoken apparently in vain, and to listless ears. Our effort to be Christlike is misunderstood and ridiculed. But we must have faith in Christ's promise, that if we live in Him life shall flow from us.

Vitalizing influences cannot fail to go forth from us. Rivers sometimes vanish from the landscape, and, after flowing for miles through underground caverns, burst into the noonday again. Believe in the influences which course through channels your eyes cannot follow. A day will come when we shall find that Christ's word was far truer than we thought. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Are we not rebuked by Christ's promise? Alas! are not our lives often like dry river-beds, or even

surging and turbid with unwholesome influences? If our life-course is to be like a beneficent river, purifying and vivifying human society, we must abide in constant contact with Christ, the Fountain of all good, in trust and communion. Then shall we become channels into which shall flow His own grace and power, and out of which shall come beauty, fruitfulness, satisfaction, joy, to children, friends, and to many whom we shall never know on earth. But we must see to it that the channel is free, and clean, and deep.

How I praise Thee, gracious Saviour,
That Thy love laid hold of me!
Thou hast saved and cleansed and filled me,
That I might Thy channel be.

Jesus, fill now with Thy Spirit
Hearts that full surrender know:
That the streams of living water
From our inner man may flow.

Channels only, blessèd Master,
But with all Thy wondrous power
Flowing through us, Thou canst use us
Every day and every hour. (*M. E. Maxwell.*)

VII

The Anointing Oil

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire,
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart.

Thy blessèd unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love,
Enable with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight.
(*Latin Hymn trans. by Bp. Cosin.*)

The 'holy anointing oil,' specially prepared with spices, sheds its fragrance over all the rites and ceremonies of the old dispensation (Exod. xxx. 23–31). Not only the tabernacle, the altar, the priests, but also kings and prophets were consecrated to God by it. In the New Testament it is specifically chosen as a symbol of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Both Christ and the Christian are represented as anointed with the Holy Spirit.

I. The Anointing of Christ.

In the Old Testament the Redeemer's name is *The Messiah,* which means *The Anointed One.* In the New Testament His corresponding name is *Christ,* which has the same meaning. The oil of anointing is the Holy Ghost (Acts x. 38), which rested on Him 'without measure' (John iii. 34).

(i.) The anointing with the Spirit was Christ's consecration for His mission.

He was set apart by the oil of the Spirit as Prophet, Priest and King, to be the Saviour of the world. This anointing He expressly claimed as His ordination for His work (Luke iv. 17–21). Here Christ distinctly affirms that the Spirit was given to Him that He might proclaim His evangel of joy, healing, deliverance, sight, and liberty to the children of men. 'Conceived by the Holy Ghost' (Luke i. 35), He was anointed by the Spirit at His baptism for His great mission of salvation (Luke iii. 22), and, as we saw in our preliminary study, in the power of the Holy Ghost He carried forward His great redeeming work to its final triumph in His resurrection. Thus abundantly did God anoint His 'holy child (servant, R.V.) Jesus' (Acts iv. 27). Christ is 'the very home and temple of the Spirit of God.' This fullness of the Spirit is in the Divine-human Christ as in a reservoir for our use.

What is Christ? Christ is a human life in which the Spirit of God is unimpeded, a human life in which the Spirit is dominant from first to last, a human life conceived by the Holy Ghost, baptized with the Holy Ghost, sustained by the Holy Ghost—a human life which consequently becomes the fountain of the Holy Ghost's power, and, when its course on earth is ended, enters into the regions of the Spirit, in order to communicate the Spirit to humanity, to open up a new and better way for that realization of the Spirit's work which has been checked by the frailty and fall of man. That is Christ. (*The Holy Spirit: R. F. Horton, D.D.*)

(ii.) Christ's anointing with the Spirit was His enduement with power.

Our Lord traced His power to the Holy Ghost (Matt. xii. 28). St. Luke repeats the truth (Luke

iv. 14), and St. Peter confirms it (Acts x. 38). As we contemplate Christ's unparalleled words and His mighty deeds we see with trembling awe what the Holy Spirit can do when He works unhindered in human nature. The chief lesson to us is learned, not from Christ's miracles, which lie for ever beyond us, but from His power over temptation, and the power by which He declared His salvation: for such power, in our degree, we too may wield, if we are anointed with the same Spirit which fitted Christ for His service.

'"His word was with power." This was the result of that unction of the Holy One, without which even the most solemn truths fall on the ear without effect. He was filled with the Spirit without measure. Therefore the truth possessed Him. He had the Spirit, not only in such degree as to fill Himself, but so as to be able to impart it to others. It overflowed with His words and seized the souls of His hearers, filling with enthusiasm their mind and heart' (*Dr. Stalker*).

'If it was in the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ lived and worked, achieved and triumphed, how much more are we dependent on Him at every turn of life and in every phase of service and in every experience of conflict with Satan and sin!' (*Dr. Torrey*).

(iii.) Christ was anointed with the 'oil of gladness' (Heb. I. 9).

At this point in his epistle the writer to the Hebrews is setting forth the supremacy of Christ, now that He is seated at God's right hand (v. 4) and 'crowned Lord of all.' He is superior to the angels, for Christ is the Son of God, whilst they are

but servants of God, who are bidden to worship Christ (v. 6). They are mere subjects, sent on God's errands, like winged flames, or sweeping winds (v. 7) : Christ is an eternal King, ruling in righteousness. His coronation is complete, and He is anointed with 'the oil of gladness,' as supreme above all others, King of kings and Lord of lords (8–9).

What is the 'oil of gladness' which thus anoints Christ as King? It is the Holy Spirit, who 'at this epoch of the ascension of Christ humbled Himself, and placed Himself at the disposal of that glorified Man' (Acts ii. 33). 'The Father anointed, the Son was anointed, the Spirit was the unction' (*Irenaeus*). 'The Holy Ghost has put Himself into the administrating and distributing hands of our ascended Saviour.' It is an amazing, overwhelming truth. Christ's investment with this power is His coronation, His anointing as King with the 'oil of gladness.' By it He gains the 'joy set before Him' (Heb. xii. 1), the joy of being able to send down to men the Spirit in renewing grace. His anointing as King is made with the 'oil *of gladness*,' for the Saviour's joy is full as He bestows the gift, and into whatever heart that holy oil distils, it is the 'oil of joy for mourning,' joy to the penitent and joy to the grief-burdened.

At Aaron's consecration the precious ointment was not only poured upon his head, but ran down in rich profusion upon his body and upon his priestly garments (Ps. cxxxiii. 2). And now we behold our Aaron, our great High-Priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, standing in the holiest in heaven. 'Thou didst love righteousness and didst hate iniquity,' is the divine encomium passed upon Him, 'therefore God, Thy God,

anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.' He, the anointed, stands above and for His anointed brethren, and from Him, the Head, the unction of the Holy Ghost descended on the Day of Pentecost. It was poured in rich profusion upon His mystical body. It has been flowing down ever since, and will continue to do so until the last member shall have been incorporated with Himself, and so anointed by the one Spirit into the one body, which is the Church. (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*)

1. The ascended Christ is anointed with gladness. The head that was crowned with thorns is garlanded with happiness. We who mourned His sorrow beneath the cross now rejoice that the cross, the shame, the contradiction of sinners, are past, and that at the right hand of God He dwells in that joy into which we by-and-by shall enter, and which we shall share. He is a *glad* Saviour!

2. If the 'oil of gladness' upon our Head is to flow down upon us, we must be part of His body, incorporated by faith into Him. The oil flows down 'to the skirts of His garments.' To us, low at His feet, in penitence and trust, it will descend: it will fall gently on us in our sadness, and will make us glad like our Lord.

> There is a place where Jesus sheds
> The oil of gladness on our heads—
> A place than all beside more sweet:
> It is the blood-stained mercy-seat.

II. The Anointing of Christians.

This anointing with the Spirit is the chief characteristic of the Christian (2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 27). All believers are the *anointed ones* of God. 'The

Spirit is the holy anointing Oil compounded of heavenly spices and prepared by the Christ for His friends' (*Clement, as given by H. B. Swete, D.D.*). In its degree the anointing of Christians signifies for them exactly what it signified for Christ. Its effects are fourfold.

(i.) It is a consecration to God.

As Christ was set apart for His work by the anointing of the Spirit, so are we for our mission. The name *Messiah* in the Old Testament was used often to denote, not only *the Christ*, but 'chosen men of God.' Hannah applies it to Samuel (1 Sam. ii. 10); David to King Saul (1 Sam. xxiv. 6); the Psalmist to the people of God (Ps. cv. 15). The same truth is imbedded in the corresponding word *Christ* in the New Testament. 'Our Saviour was called *Christ*, and we are called *Christians*, the anointed followers of the Anointed One. Thus we bear the anointing in our names as He did. We are the *Messiahs* of the New Dispensation! the *Christs* of God!' 'You who have been made partakers of Christ are rightly called "Christs": there was given to you an unction which is the antitype of that wherewith Christ was anointed' (*Cyril*). As soon as we believe in Christ we receive the Spirit to dwell in our hearts, the seal of our acceptance with God, and our anointing for a specific purpose, to fit us for being prophets, priests, and kings.

'You are anointed to be prophets that you may make known Him who has loved and saved you. That anointing calls and fits you to be priests, mediators between God and man. That unction

calls and fits you to be kings, exercising authority over the little monarchy of your own natures and over the men round you, who will bow in submission whenever they come in contact with a man filled with Christ's Spirit. Alas! for the difference between what we ought to be and what we are!' (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*).

'We must be washed from our sins in the blood of Him that loved us, before we can be made priests unto God (Rev. i. 5–6). There must be complete consecration. Moses touched with blood the ear, the hand, the foot of the priests, ere they were anointed with oil. The consecration seemed to say, *hear* and *think* for God: *work* for God: *walk* with God: glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits which are God's' (*Philip Norton*).

(ii.) It is an enduement with power.

Like Christ, the Christian receives the enduement of power through the Holy Spirit (Acts i. 8; Eph. iii. 16). This is a truth of the highest importance for preachers. Our fathers used to speak of the necessity of 'unction' in preaching. By it they meant 'the enduement of power' through the Spirit's anointing. What a difference this 'unction' makes! 'There is nothing more death-dealing than the gospel without the Spirit's power.' But this power gives life, reality, grip to the sermon: sinners are bowed beneath it, convinced of sin, and led to surrender to Christ. Ministries long barren are crowned with conversions after the preacher is anointed with the Holy Ghost. But the same anointing is absolutely necessary to every Christian for the service Christ demands of him.

With it we shall accomplish more for our Lord in one day than we would in years without it. Even the silent witness of a Spirit-filled life will have a mighty influence: it will be fragrant with the spices of Christ's garden. Our spoken testimony in the Sunday school, in the home, amongst our friends, by the wayside, will graciously sway those who hear. Words spoken in the Spirit's power will prevail, if not at once, at last. Stephen was 'full of the Spirit,' and we read, 'They were *not able to resist* the wisdom *and the Spirit* by which he spake' (Acts vi. 10).

A lady and gentleman came to me and told me how, though they had never seen me before, they had read an address of mine on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and had sought and received the gift. The man then told me the blessing that had come into his work as superintendent of the Sunday school. When he had finished his wife broke in and said, 'Yes, and the best part of it is, I have been able to get into the hearts of my own children, which I was never able to do before.' (*Dr. Torrey.*)

(iii.) It is a bestowal of joy.

The Spirit was shed upon the exalted Head as the 'oil of *gladness*,' and as such He flows down upon every member of that Head to give him '*joy* in the Holy Ghost' (Rom. xiv. 17). The Holy Spirit is a source of 'inward glee' to those who receive Him, a glee so satisfying that it makes them independent of the world's pleasures. As an old writer says, 'They feel well and merry and going to heaven.' There is often a 'solar look,' a sunny light upon their very faces. Even in times of natural sorrow the Spirit of God fills their hearts with divine cheer,

and they receive 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' This sacred oil heals the wounds in our hearts as nothing else can: it is the '*healthful* Spirit of grace.'

There may be situations when an angel's word would bruise the lacerated heart. But the Holy Spirit does not articulate a single word: He only pours drop by drop the divine oil upon the wound, and the wound closes. (*Gasparin.*)

(iv.) It is an 'unction' of knowledge.

This fact is clearly set forth in 1 John ii. 20, 27. Our Lord used almost the same words about the Holy Ghost as our Teacher (John xiv. 26). He who is anointed with the Spirit will have 'more than Nature's insight' into the truth of salvation, will have a divinely-given instinct to save him from error. That Spirit will guide us through the prayerful study of the Word, and all His guidance will be marked by the sanity and wisdom which He bestowed on Christ. We may receive help and instruction from human teachers, but in our final decision as to what is spiritual truth they must all stand aside: the Spirit of God alone suffices to make known to us the essential, the saving fact. He alone is the ultimate religious authority: alone with Him, with reverent, humble, thoughtful mind, we are guided, amidst the cries of discordant teachers, into all the truth that concerns us. We are not infallible, but the Holy Spirit is; and if we could only come into absolutely perfect communion with Him we should never make any real mistake!

By Thine unerring Spirit led,
We shall not in the desert stray:
We shall not full direction need,
Nor miss our providential way:
As far from danger as from fear,
While love, almighty love is near. (*C. Wesley.*)

'If the Spirit of God were living in you completely unchecked you would be directed in the most trivial details: you would know what step to take next: what business to engage in: how to choose a wife: what books to read: how to cope with disease and disaster, how to face life and death' (*R. F. Horton, D.D.*).

Such is the ideal, but alas! how far below it we fall! Yet let us aspire to it, seeking divine light, and we shall see ever deeper into the truth and providence of God.

(v.) The anointing of the Spirit is obtained by faith.

It is not every Christian who has received it in its fullness, but all may do so (Acts ii. 38–39). 'Any one who will accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, put away all sin out of their life, publicly confess their renunciation of sin and acceptance of Jesus Christ, surrender absolutely to God, ask God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and take it by simple faith in the naked Word of God (Mark xi. 24), can receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit right now' (*Dr. Torrey*).

In one word, the faith that brings the blessing is absolute trust in and entire self-surrender and committal to Christ, who alone can give it. He will not fail to bestow it upon us, and, as we abide in Him, to renew it continually. His outpouring will be according to our faith. (Read 2 Kings iv. 1–8.)

When the vessels failed the oil ceased: the more vessels the more oil. So, the more absolute trust in and loyalty to Christ, the more copious will be our anointing.

Stretch my faith's capacity
Wider, and yet wider still:
Then with all that is in Thee
My soul for ever fill! (*C. Wesley.*)

VIII

Salt

> Ah! Lord, with trembling I confess,
> A gracious soul may fall from grace:
> The salt may lose its seasoning power,
> And never, never find it more. (*C. Wesley.*)

Our Lord was wont to use common objects as symbols of great spiritual truths—as, for instance, a lamp, leaven, bread, wine. Salt, with which Palestine abounded, was thus employed by Him. One of His purposes in so doing was to surround us with constant remembrancers of His love and of our duty. Each time we sit down to a meal the salt should remind us of some most important lessons. It has a well-known antiseptic and preservative quality.

I. Salt is a Symbol of the Purifying Influence of the Holy Spirit.

(i.) In the heart (Mark ix. 49–50, R.V.).

Christ's command, 'Have salt in yourselves,' means that His disciples are to keep in their hearts the abiding power of His grace through His Spirit. But how is this to be accomplished? We cannot ourselves create the inward grace which purifies the soul.

1. The work begins with the sacrifice of all that is antagonistic to spiritual life. Whether it be 'the hand' which works evil, or 'the foot' which leads us astray, or 'the eye' which loves to gaze

on sin, each must be 'cut off' or 'plucked out' (vv. 43–48). In other words, our whole nature must be offered to God in willing sacrifice.

2. Every such sacrifice will be 'salted with fire.' The text reads 'Every one shall be salted with fire.' But since he who offers the sacrifice is offering himself with all his powers, it is really the *sacrifice* which is so salted. The law commanded that all offerings should be seasoned with salt (Lev. ii. 13). This sacrificial salt was to preserve at least the animal-offering from taint and loathsomeness: it was, as a part of its meaning, the expression of the worshipper's desire to offer a sacrifice free from corruption. But we can present no such pure offering to God: what we offer is already corrupt —a sinful 'hand,' a wandering 'foot,' a roving 'eye.' Salt is powerless to purify our sacrifice, for it can only keep sweet what is already sweet. Therefore the sacrifice is to be 'salted with *fire*,' with the cleansing flame of God's Spirit (Matt. iii. 11). Thus shall the inborn corruption of our offering be purged away, and our whole soul be filled 'with truth in the inward parts.' When we lay all on the altar we shall not have to wait long for the sacrificial flame: it falls upon the altar the moment we are fully given up to God.

3. Our sacrifice being *made* pure by His 'fire,' the Holy Ghost will dwell in our hearts as 'salt' to *keep* us from moral decay (v. 50). The Spirit as *fire* cleanses, and as *salt* keeps clean our hearts, till their core shall be 'like a shrine, holy: like snow, pure: like flame, warm: like death, strong.' The alternative to the cleansing fire is the unquenchable fire (v. 48).

4. A nature thus purified will enable us 'to be at peace one with another.' The heart, cleansed by 'fire' and kept sweet by 'salt,' will retain no anger or malice.

'When,' says Mrs. Jonathan Edwards, describing a great visitation of the Spirit, received in the night, 'I arose on the morning of the Sabbath, I felt a love to all mankind, wholly peculiar in its strength and sweetness. I thought if I were surrounded by enemies, who were tormenting me, it would be still impossible that I should cherish any feelings towards them but those of love, and pity, and ardent desires for their happiness.' (*Edwards' Narrative of Revival in New England.*)

One of my mates struck me on the face. I turned the other cheek to him, and said, 'Strike again.' He struck me five times. I turned my cheek for the sixth stroke; but he turned away, cursing. I shouted after him, 'The Lord forgive thee, for I do, and the Lord save thee.' This was on Saturday. On Monday he met me when I got down into the pit: he burst into tears, and said, 'Richard, will you forgive me for striking you?' 'I have forgiven thee,' said I. 'Ask God to forgive thee. The Lord bless thee.' I gave him my hand, and we went each to his work. (*Life of Richard Weaver.*)

(ii.) In Christian character (Matt. v. 13).

The 'salt' of the Holy Spirit will not only keep pure our own hearts: it will also make us agents of purification in the world. It is those in whose hearts dwell the graces of the Beatitudes who are the 'salt of the earth.' Character, rather than speech, keeps the world wholesome; *being*, rather than *doing*, purifies the life around us.

'Those who have in themselves the salt of spirituality are indeed the salt of the earth. There is an indefinable something about them which the world feels and knows. St. Paul speaks of it as

'the savour of Christ.' Just as salt preserves the thing that is salted, so does the quiet influence of truly Christian men and women preserve all that is best and worthiest in the world' (*J. Kelman, D.D.*).

1. The presence of Christian people becomes by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a moral antiseptic. It is so in the *nation* as a whole. How much England owes to 'the salt of the earth' can never be measured. Take away the religious people out of our land, and quickly the nation would sink into decay and decomposition. Despite all our hypocrisy and sin, 'soundness of moral fibre runs through the country and is the national integrity.' The waters of England's social life, bitter apart from Christ, are kept sweet by the 'salt' of Christian influences (2 Kings ii. 19–22). So, too, the *church* itself is preserved from corruption by its spirit-filled saints. Their prayers, their character, do much to sterilize the germs of worldliness and of apathy: their influence keeps the young, the weak Christians in it from despair and declension, leading them to renewed faith and endeavour. Especially in the *home* does real religion exert its gracious influence, checking frivolity, ill-temper, sin. A holy life in a home will stand as a 'mild rebuking between us and the wrong.'

Richard Cecil, the great preacher, tried to be an infidel when he was a youth: but he could not resist his mother's beautiful piety. He says, 'She used to talk to me, and weep as she talked. I flung out of the house with an oath, but I cried too when I had got out into the street.' 'Chips of the old block' are most of our children after all. How vitally important it is that the old blocks be sound timber! (*Dr. Cuyler.*)

2. The action of the 'salt' is pungent. There will be times when the world will vote our religion offensive. Though at heart they respect it, they will resent its quiet power. Like salt rubbed into a fresh wound, it will irritate them, and may provoke opposition and even persecution. As far as is right, we should avoid causing offence. We are to 'have salt in ourselves,' but at the same time to 'be at peace with one another': we are to mingle courtesy and consideration and charity with loyalty to our convictions. After all, salt is only a 'seasoning'; it is not to be given in handfuls or large doses, or violently 'thrust down people's throats,' but must be sprinkled, so as to give just a piquant flavour to our words and deeds. Still, we must be faithful to conscience, even if to do so make us unpopular. We should keep the saline quality, the sharp tang of holiness: salt must not become sugar. Christians influence men more by their likeness to Christ than by their likeness to the world, by 'their differences rather than by their conformities.' The best non-conformity is that of Rom. xii. 2.

'It is often good to appeal to men's good nature as congenial spirits: the highest influence is that which appeals to their sense of truth and smites upon their conscience' (*J. Kelman, D.D.*).

One day a man was bathing in the Thames. 'Ah!' cried a man on the bank, 'behold a Quaker in the river!' 'How can you know I am a Quaker, when I am without my distinctive dress?' asked the bather. 'Because you swim against the stream—that is how Quakers always do.' May it be said of us—Yonder are men born of God. Why? Because they swim against the current of worldly habits and frivolities. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

3. This silent, humble work of checking evil by a pure example is yet a glorious one. It will cost us sacrifice of pleasure, the pain of being misunderstood, the favour, perhaps, of some so-called friends, but it is worth while, if only we may help to preserve the goodness of our home and church and nation. We may sometimes think we have no influence, but if we are true to Christ, that cannot be the case.

'The salt cannot but tell, and the day will declare it. At the end the disciple of Christ will thank God for some, all undreamed-of until then, who have owed the preservation of their faith and character to his unostentatious but real Christian life' (*J. Kelman, D.D.*).

(iii.) In Christian Conversation (Col. iv. 6).

Salt is used not only as an antiseptic, but to impart flavour. Our speech is to be always 'seasoned with the salt of grace' (*Weymouth*). The best explanation of Col. iv. 6 is found in Eph. iv. 29, where we are taught that our conversation is 'to give grace to them that hear,' i.e. be a means of blessing to them. Mingled with our talk there should always be something to do good.

1. *The 'salt' of usefulness.* We are to avoid 'idle' words (Matt. xii. 36), 'corrupt' or unwholesome words (Eph. iv. 29), 'railing' or insulting words (Eph. iv. 31), 'foolish talking or jesting' (Eph. v. 4). Is there, then, no room for wit, pleasantry, fun? Certainly there is. Humour may 'minister grace': it may effectively rebuke a fault, or pierce a sophistry, or cheer a despondent mind.

'Idle' words are words which do no good, help nobody; 'foolish talking' is empty, trifling, profitless chatter. We should flavour our conversation with instruction, avoiding pedantry and the style of a 'Sir Oracle.' Especially should we do this in our homes.

'Now that the daily newspaper contains a summary of the world's doings and happenings, this is easy. At least one new fact at each meal may be added to the common knowledge. There should be no home in which time is not found every day to say at least one word that shall be instructive, suggestive, elevating, or at least, in some way, helpful' (*Dr. Miller*).

Often we may let fall a gentle word that will greatly cheer some discouraged heart that is hungry for sympathy and kindness.

'In a few moments' conversation by the wayside, or during the formal call, or in the midst of the day's heat and strife, we may drop the word that will lift a burden, or strengthen a fainting heart, or inspire a new hope, or give warning of danger. We may leave blessings at every step of our way. Our words in season, throbbing with love, and wafted by the breath of silent prayer, shall be medicine to every heart into which any simplest sentence of our speech may fall' (*Dr. Miller*).

2. *The 'salt' of charity.* Some professing Christians think it a sign of cleverness to be able to detect the faults of others. They have 'eagle eyes to see a brother's shortcomings, but they are moles in respect to their own.' Uncharitable speech proceeds always from an unkind heart.

They who drink the juice of the Ethiopian herb called *Ophiusa* imagine that they see everywhere serpents and other frightful things: so they who have swallowed down pride, envy, ambition, and hatred think everything they see evil and blameable. (*Francis de Sales.*)

To be quite idle, doing nothing at all, is a better way of spending time than to employ it in censorious talk.

> Better than such discourse, doth silence long,
> Long, barren silence, square with my desire,
> To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
> In the loved presence of my cottage-fire,
> And listen to the flapping of the flame,
> Or kettle whispering its faint undersong. (*Wordsworth.*)

If we can find no good quality in our neighbour about which to speak, we can generally be silent. If it is our duty to speak we should seek, if possible, to extenuate his fault. 'To know all is to forgive all' is a saying we may profitably remember.

If any action can be seen under a hundred different aspects, one ought always to select that one which is most favourable. If we cannot find any excuse for the act itself, we may lessen its evil character by imputing some good intention: if there is nothing to be said on that score, we should take into consideration the violence of temptation, or attribute it to ignorance, sudden assault, or human frailty, so as to take away what we can from the inevitable blame. (*Francis de Sales.*)

On fit opportunity we should flavour our conversation with 'a word for Jesus.' As we walk in a wood, whenever we look up we can catch through the waving boughs some glimpse of the sky: so

through the foliage of our speech, swayed by every passing breeze, men should see some fair vision of heaven. It is possible to speak of God winsomely, without affectation or cant or repellent solemnity.

Archdeacon Philpot, who lived to be ninety-nine, made great use of personal conversation to urge home the claims of the gospel. One day he told me this incident: 'Coming down to London I was placed in a railway carriage with three gentlemen who were very worldly in their talk—playing cards. I was watching for an opportunity, when they fell into a hot dispute over a fact of history. I interrupted, saying that the events happened seventy-five years ago, and that, being now ninety-eight, I remembered them well. One of them exclaimed, "Tell us how we may live to be as old and hale and hearty as you!" Now was my chance,' said the Archdeacon, 'and I replied: "Gentlemen, I will give you three rules of long life: First, be at peace with God." This I expounded from Scripture. I paused and held off as they became a little restless. At last, out of curiosity, one called: "Well, give us the second rule." I replied: "Be at peace with your neighbour." I gave them the teaching of 1 Cor. xiii. After another lull the third rule was requested. "It is," I said, "to avoid drugs and medicine!" "That appeals to me," said one, "since I am a physician." But I had gained my opportunity. This method I have pursued with great profit through my long life.' (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*)

(*a*) *Useful* conversation is only possible if we first learn all we can from men and books.

(*b*) *Charitable* conversation is only attainable when the heart is Spirit-filled with love to God and man.

(*c*) *Religious* conversation is only effective when God's grace dwells richly in the soul and on our lips through the Holy Ghost.

II. Salt is a Symbol of the Truth that the Holy Spirit May be Lost.

(i.) The salt may become savourless (Matt. v. 13; Mark ix. 50; Luke xiv. 34–35).

On three different occasions, and each time with a different application, was this fact uttered by our Lord. Shallow thinkers have said that Christ was mistaken in supposing that salt could lose its savour. We might answer that the natural rock-salt used in Palestine did thus lose its saltness, leaving but a lump of earth. But the cavil is childish. If Christ's question be a mere hypothesis, a supposition by way of illustration, its awful significance is unaltered. The point is that Christ's disciples may lose the 'savour of Christ.' None will deny that solemn truth.

Christians may lose the antiseptic pungency which stays corruption: the spiritual force which purifies the soul and human life around may evaporate. The Spirit may be 'quenched,' the first love 'left,' the savour 'lost.'

Where my heart broke, in thinking about this subject, was at the word 'lost.' I went to a bottle the other day in which I was keeping some spirits of wine. I found the cork was defective. By evaporation the stuff had lost every quality it was worth my keeping it for: it was only liquid. Are we all just as we were? Look at yourself and say: 'Has the sweet fragrance of Jesus gone out of me? I am a much busier person than I once was: I have a hand in every committee.' Yes, but have you lost anything? Oh, heart of mine, speak truly! Thou hast lost thy first love, thou hast lost the bloom of thy purity, thou hast lost delight in the friendship of Jesus. (*F. B. Meyer.*)

Is there any decay in the spiritual power of our religion? There may be less emotion as the years go, less feeling as age makes us less sensitive, but is our love to Christ less real, less obedient? The forms of our usefulness may vary as we grow older, but a real Christian is never useless. Are we really still a power for good? Do our lives rebuke worldliness? Does our character make religion attractive? Let us tremble lest 'our faith decline, our love grow cold'; lest, like some we have known, we make shipwreck of the faith (1 Tim. i. 19).

It never once entered my mind in my earlier days that I could ever fall away from Christ. I saw the danger of others, but I never saw my own. I preached from the text, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,' and pressed the solemn warning on my hearers with the greatest earnestness: but I never applied it to myself. If any one had told me I should one day cease to be a Christian, and be ranked with the opponents of Christianity, I should have thought him insolent or mad. Yet you know what followed. (*Autobiography of Joseph Barker: a minister who became an infidel, but who was brought back to Christ.*)

(ii.) Savourless salt is 'good for nothing.'

'The standpoint of the text is that of the kitchen.' If salt fails to do the only thing for which it can be used, it fails altogether. It is not worth keeping for a moment, and so the housewife throws the earthy residuum to mingle with its kindred earth on the road: she has no use for it. Thus a Church, a Christian, if the 'saltness' be 'leached out,' will become like a lump of common earth, fit only to be trodden into the pathway. Their only purpose in God's mind is to save and bless mankind. Powerless

to do this they are valueless to Him. God can only 'cast them out,' reject them, as of no service. We may become so 'savourless' that God cannot employ us with any effect. We may preach, or teach, or work in the Church, but there is no divine blessing, no spiritual power in our endeavour. God has set us aside as being of no good. It is a terrible doom, even on earth, to be swept over God's house-door into the road, disowned of God, not because we are openly sinful, but just because we are useless: it is a foretaste of the bitterness of the casting away of all reprobate souls in the final judgement. Whatever is useless, like savourless salt or a barren tree, whether it be a Church or a nominal disciple, Christ will condemn. It is a real and solemn peril.

A friend of mine who had had several threatenings for some months, underwent an operation. All went well, but the doctors found it was a more serious case than they thought: they were only just in time. It may be that you are conscious of slight uneasiness in your spiritual life: yet you do not think there is anything very serious the matter. But it may be the beginning of a *paralysis of your work for God.* Let the tender-hearted Physician deal with you at once. (*H. C. Lees, M.A.*)

(iii.) Can savourless salt be re-salted?

In the realm of nature this is clearly impossible. But in the sphere of grace it is not so. What cannot be done to the natural salt can be done to the spiritual salt. Many who have lost the 'savour of life,' who, once 'partakers of the Holy Ghost,' have forfeited this comfort, have felt their state to be irretrievable as they have read Heb. vi. 4–8. At first sight the awful words seem to leave no door of hope. But the passage in the Revised Version (margin)

states that repentance is impossible only '*the while* they crucify the Son of God afresh.' So long as they continue to crucify their Lord by their self-indulgence, 'and by reiterated crimes renew His mortal pain,' restoration of the lost grace is impossible. But if they cease to do this, if they put away the sins which so crucify Christ afresh, if, falling at His pierced feet, they bathe them with the tears of penitence, He will forgive and restore His love to their hearts. So St. Peter found : so many an apostate has discovered.

I do indeed still cling to Christ. He is, in God, my all, my Teacher, Guide, Example, Saviour, and unfailing Comforter. When not tortured by bodily pain, I am, as a rule, unspeakably happy in His love. When the torture returns I can only say, 'Thy will be done.' (*Joseph Barker : in a letter written six weeks before his death.*)

God forbid that we should ever lose our 'saltness.' 'Christ in our heart' by His Holy Spirit is the one secret of maintaining the 'savour' of Christ. Neglect communion with Him, and the 'salt' will inevitably become useless. If we abide in Him, and He abide in us, it is just as certain that we shall remain Christ's 'salt,' sparkling, pure, wholesome, cleansing.

IX

Fruit

Yea, let Thy Spirit in every place
Its richer energy declare:
While lovely tempers, fruits of grace,
The kingdom of Thy Christ prepare.
(*H. More, D.D.*)

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance (*Gal. v.* 22).

'Fruit' at once suggests an orchard. A picture rises before the mind. We see the trees, laden with growing fruit half-hidden amid the leaves, or already ripe, whilst above is the autumn sky, and all around us are the scenes, and scents and sounds of the sweet country-side. It is the orchard of the Divine Husbandman of which St. Paul is speaking, and the fruit is for His glory. The suggestion of the symbol is that the root of all the fruitage of ethical perfection is the indwelling Spirit of God. This root itself, its planting in the soul, its clusters of fruit form our theme.

I. The Root is the Holy Ghost in the Believer's Heart.

Like a root deep in the soil the Spirit of God dwells in the hidden depths of the soul. He is the source of the virtues described as 'fruit': it is His implanting and ripening action which makes them grow. In other words it is His operation in the subcon-

scious soul which initiates and sustains all impulses to a better life, and which brings them to fruition in character. The Holy Ghost is the active power in all true regeneration of human life, when it is 'born of the Spirit' (John iii. 8). Our spiritual life can only be maintained as an active, moral force as we are 'strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man' (Eph. iii. 16). All growth in spiritual attainment, all increasing likeness to our Lord is possible only as we are 'transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit' (2 Cor. iii. 18). 'The ultimate power, operative in Christian experience, is the Holy Spirit.'

> And every virtue we possess,
> And every conquest won,
> And every thought of holiness,
> Are His alone. (*Auber.*)

It is only as we remember this fact that we can cherish any hope of bearing the fruit which our Lord seeks from us. Otherwise such attainment is for ever beyond us. For instance, it is opposed to the known laws of the human heart that it should love an unseen God. But the Spirit of God can accomplish this miracle of grace, as countless cases prove (Rom. v. 5).

The great philosopher, David Brewster, just before entering into the secret of the new birth, was much perplexed by the truth that the first claim of religion was love to God. Talking to his daughter he told her that it was impossible to love a God whom he had never seen. 'I might admire His wisdom,' he said, 'as it is displayed in nature: I might even trust that wisdom to work out all things to a right issue, but that I should love God, as one man loves another, I cannot think possible.' His daughter, who up

to this time had never spoken to him of her conversion, then told him how the Holy Ghost had 'shed abroad' in her heart the love of God. She says 'He listened most attentively, and when I had finished he took me in his arms, and said, in such a childlike manner, "Go now, and pray that I may know this too."'

All things are possible to him in whom dwell the 'omnipotent potencies of the Divine Presence,' even that our lives should be filled with all the fruit of the Spirit.

O let Thy Spirit shed abroad
The love, the perfect love of God,
In this cold heart of mine!
O might He now descend, and rest,
And dwell for ever in my breast,
And make it all divine. (*C. Wesley.*)

II. The Implanting of the Root.

It is important to bear in mind that the Holy Spirit is given to every human being 'coming into the world,' and dwells in every soul. If this were not so human nature would have no capacity for salvation. 'He is in every responsible soul a remembrancer of a forfeited estate, the prompter to feel after God and regain that communion which all history proves to be an inextinguishable yearning of mankind. He suffers not the spirit of man to forget its great loss. When the Apostle says (Rom. ii. 14–15) that the Gentiles have the law "written in their hearts," and in conscience measure their conduct by that standard, and may do "by nature the things contained in the law," he teaches us plainly that in the inmost recesses of nature there is the secret mystery of grace, which, if not resisted

and quenched, prompts the soul to feel after God, and gives it those secret, inexplicable beginnings of the movement towards good on which fuller grace lays hold' (*W. B. Pope, D.D.*). But it is only as the Spirit puts forth His richer energy in the soul that He can effectively produce His fruit in our lives. The moment of our surrender to Christ is the moment in which this sacred root sends forth its fibres into our being; the Spirit may be said to be then implanted, imparted, 'shed abroad' in our hearts. When the bars of our will are withdrawn the Spirit of God comes into the depths of our soul to dwell there as the creative power of a new life: 'He dwelleth with you and shall be in you' (John xiv. 17). This indwelling energy is the gift of Christ to those who put themselves into His hands in penitent faith. Faith in Christ is the only way of receiving the Spirit. It is the mistake of such mystical writers as William Law that they teach us to 'turn inward if we would turn to and find God,' and 'to depend only upon a God of light and love, ever dwelling in the inmost depth and spirit of your soul.' Whilst such counsel contains precious truth it is apt to end in subjective dreaming, and to turn our gaze away from Christ at the right hand of God, who alone can give the Holy Spirit in sanctifying power. We must not look within for the coming of grace, nor even merely abandon ourselves to the fuller influence of the Spirit as we already possess Him, but must look up to the living, transcendent Saviour, seeking from Him a mightier enduement which does not spring up in the heart, but descends and 'falls upon' us from heaven. Our prayer to Christ should be,

Plant, and root, and fix in me
All the mind that was in Thee.

When the root of all holy living is thus implanted its mysterious, fructifying processes in the psychical depths are inevitable. Deeper and deeper the Spirit strikes His rootlets into the willing soul: higher and higher out of the depths rises the glad growth seeking the light and the visible world: the new life is irrepressible and urges upward into bloom and fruitage: it must thus express itself or perish.

III. The Fruit.

1. The first appearance of the life which thus works in the unknown and impenetrable spaces of the soul is in the field of the believer's own consciousness, as 'love, joy, peace.' These graces of the Spirit are the earliest leaves or fruit to show themselves, like a plant rising above the soil. They are not visible to outside observers, for they are known only to God and the happy soul in which they bloom. They are a secret, hidden experience: faint odours of their fragrance are wafted into the world, like the scents of flowers over a high garden wall, but their full sweetness is only enjoyed in the Christian's own heart. '*Love*' fills the soul with divine impulses: the affections are transformed: the former selfishness seems shameful: in this sphere of life also we may say,

Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight. (*Tennyson.*)

Our love takes in new objects, becoming tender and self-sacrificing: it shares the qualities of the divine love, and we take the same sort of interest in our fellow men which God does. What this love is we find depicted in the most beautiful fruit-piece ever given to human sight, St. Paul's hymn in praise of charity (1 Cor. xiii.).

The Spirit of God is love, and as such is immanent in the heart of the universe. We see the effects of His energy in the love of parents for their children, of friends for one another, and even in the love of the bird for its fledglings in their nest, where the mother bird sits, and is consumed when the bush which holds the nest is all on fire. All love is of God. But it reaches its divinest manifestation in the heart surrendered entirely to His indwelling grace, where, beginning with love to God it overflows to all around, even to our enemies.

I long to hand a full cup of blessing to every human creature. (*Edward Payson.*)

Most of our family were soon after converted to God; and what a blessed change did religion now make among us! Before its blessed influences were known in our family, nothing but discord, jealousy, and ill-will were there. Now our jars ceased, peace returned, and harmony and love reigned. (*William Black: early Methodist preacher.*)

'*Joy*' fills the consciousness, for the burden of condemnation is lifted from the heart, and the pollution of sin is washed away. 'The unrest, the shame, the chagrin, the anguish all vanish from the soul as by magic. This glad emotion varies from a calm peace to an ecstatic joy: it is the holy exhilaration of cleansed powers' (*Dr. Warner*).

Since that night when I gave myself to God my life has been one long joy and gladness. (*In the Hand of the Potter: Begbie.*)

> To Him, from wandering long and wild,
> I came an over-wearied child,
> In cool and shade His peace to find
> Like dew-fall settling on my mind. (*Whittier.*)

'*Peace*' belongs to this earliest cluster of the 'fruit of the Spirit.' Peace may be the first emotion of the forgiven heart rather than joy. But peace is also a distinct fruit of the Spirit, with its own peculiar sweetness. It means the ceasing of the inward strife between desire and duty: it is the harmony of our will with God's: the unifying of all our powers in doing what will please Him, so that the discord of the 'divided self' is ended, if not instantaneously, by steady progress of goodness.

A miracle happened. The craving for alcohol was cast out by the craving for holiness. She lost the least wish for drink: she felt an intense longing for purity. (*In the Hand of the Potter: Begbie.*)

As real and unmistakable as the scent of violets was a peace of soul passing all understanding. His mind was at rest. (*Ibid.*)

2. The inner energy of the Spirit pushes higher till it rises into the outer life: it issues in conduct: it manifests itself in 'lovely tempers,' in fragrant actions, 'fruits of grace.' The outward life conforms to the inner experience. Religion is not 'a mere jugglery of emotions': it is a principle as well as a feeling, a purpose as much as a sentiment (Matt. vii. 16; John xv. 5–8).

The 'fruit' of the Spirit is more than secret 'love, joy, peace': it shows itself in our dealings with our fellow men as 'long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.' It lies outside our purpose to analyse these various dispositions of mind and principles of conduct. They cannot be trained in precise arrangement along any trellis of thought, without the loss of some of their most exquisite bloom. In their combination they describe a character, in which are found strength and gentleness, dignity and tenderness, uprightness and attractiveness. It is a picture of perfect manhood. Invested with such characteristics the name of 'Christian'

> Is full of gentlest meaning: odours rise
> And beauty floats around it,
> Hark! 'tis the loftiest name the language bears,
> And all the languages in all the worlds
> Have none so sublime. It relates to Christ,
> And breathes of God and holiness,
> By the rich graces of the Holy Ghost,
> To fit them for the Paradise on high. (*Cowper.*)

Of course, such fruit does not come to ripeness without cultivation, but the essential thing to bear in mind is that apart from the Spirit of God no such harvest of character is possible: recognized or unrecognized all moral loveliness is of His operation. The only way of ethical excellence is to seek His influences by faith in Christ. Hear an old-time presentation of this truth:

> Now as Gawaine and Ector sat thus talking they saw an hand showing unto the elbow, and covered with red samite, and upon that hung a bridle not right rich, and held within

the fist a great candle which burned right clear, and so passed afore them, and entered into the chapel, and then vanished away and they wist not where. . . . Then spake the hermit unto Ector: Now will I tell you what betokeneth the hand with the candle and the bridle: that is to understand the Holy Ghost, where charity is ever, and the bridle signifieth abstinence. For when she is bridled in Christian man's heart she holdeth him so short that he falleth not in deadly sin. And the candle which showeth clearness and light signifieth the right way of Jesu Christ. . . . These three things failed, charity, abstinence, truth: therefore ye may not attain that high adventure of the Sangreal. (*La Morte D'Arthur: Malory*, 1469.)

Not alone the bridle of temperance hangs on the arm of God the Spirit but all adornments of human life, and Christ's light alone shows the way to them. So men find to-day.

All the hesitancy left him. Temptations to which he had yielded withered like flowers struck by a frost. He was conscious of strength. He was conscious of courage. Never more would he be ashamed to confess His Master. Rather with a very glory of suffusing certitude would he profess the faith of his soul, and live the life of a Galahad, even if it had to be in a London shop. (*In the Hand of the Potter.*)

3. If the 'fruit of the Spirit' is to grow to perfection it needs cultivation. There must be constant *contact with Christ*, that He may pour ever-new accessions of the Holy Ghost into the heart. Christ is the Sun, and the Holy Spirit streams from Him: in the warmth and sunshine of His beams the soul must ever abide, by habitual trust and expectation. There must be *spiritual husbandry*. All injurious habits, all sinful influences, all worldly tendencies

must be cut away: the growth of our spiritual life will be in direct proportion to the subdual of unholy appetite by the application of the keen knife of self-denial. The soul must be enriched by prayer, by meditation, by fellowship with God's people, that it may bring forth 'much fruit.' The fruit will require *time for its ripening*. 'Fruit suggests time and patience: the sun kisses it: rains enrich it: time ripens it: it has need of storms as well as sun: frosts of winter as well as rains of summer minister to its growth. So is it with the fruit of the Spirit: winters of sorrow: nights of darkness: awakening times of revival: scorching heats of temptation: long waiting—all these are in the history of fruit' (*Hobart*). But in the end there will be ample reward. Once the orange was but a little, bitter berry, but by cultivation it has become a great, golden globe of sweetness! Who shall say to what perfection our poor natures may come? The full ripening of the fruit in our heart is only possible as the Holy Spirit gives us grace: that is His part of the work, and He will do it. Ours is just to abide in Jesus, daily practising the virtues which He has implanted, and which He keeps alive in us by shedding upon us the fullness of His Spirit 'in showers of heavenly love.'

Make our earthly souls a field
  Which God delights to bless;
Let us in due season yield
  The fruits of righteousness;
Make us trees of paradise,
  Which more and more Thy praise may show,
Deeper sink, and higher rise,
  And to perfection grow. (*C. Wesley.*)

II

SYMBOLS FROM HUMAN LIFE

I

The Controversy

By Thy Spirit, Lord, reprove,
All my inmost sins reveal,
Sins against Thy light and love
Let me see, and let me feel:
Sins that crucified my God,
Spilt again Thy precious blood. (*C. Wesley.*)

And He, when He is come, will convict the world, in respect of sin; and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin because they believe not on me: of righteousness because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more: of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged (*John xvi.* 8–11, R.V.).

The symbol of the Spirit given in this passage is taken from a controversy. On the one side is man's soul arguing for the truth of its own opinions: it denies its own sin, affirms the validity of its own righteousness, disputes the fact of a coming judgement. On the other side is the Holy Ghost replying to its every shallow argument: He does this with such power that the soul, driven from point to point, is at length powerless to find an answer: it is convinced of its sinfulness, that only in Christ is there any hope of righteousness, and that the judgement of God upon the impenitent is a solemn reality. The text only declares that the Spirit will do this work, all over the world, wherever Christ is proclaimed; it does not promise that His inward striving will always lead to salvation. Whether the Spirit's conviction shall issue in conversion or darken

into condemnation is the soul's own awful responsibility. We shall best study this solemn subject if we endeavour to trace the operation of the Spirit of conviction in an individual heart.

I. The Threefold Conviction.

It should be noted with special care that each phase of the Spirit's work of 'conviction' has reference to Christ. He convinces of sin as it is *against* Christ, of righteousness as it is *through* Christ, of judgement as it is *by* Christ.

We shall illustrate each point chiefly from the autobiographies of the early Methodist preachers, which contain the most careful and accurate diagnosis of religious experience in all literature.

(i.) It is a conviction of Sin against Christ (v. 8).

Sin is spoken of in a special phase, as unbelief in Christ (v. 9). It is not a conviction of breaking this or that commandment, but of ingratitude for the love of God in His Son. 'It is not the sin-question, but the Son-question,' which the Holy Ghost lays on the heart. He may indeed point to some wicked deed, but it is to pierce the heart with its enormity as a sin against divine love. The root and climax of all sin is the despising of Christ's atoning death. This slighting of the dying love of Christ, even if our outward life were moral, is in itself a sin of deepest dye and compels the divine indignation (John iii. 26). The conviction of sin often begins in the feeling that sin is a mistake, but at one stage or another in the history of every conversion this conviction of the sin of

rejecting Christ's offered salvation becomes the chief sorrow of the soul.

When I heard the preachers speak of the love of Christ and of His willingness to save poor lost sinners, it fixed my convictions the deeper to think I should be such a rebel against so loving a Saviour. (*John Murlin*, 1722–1799.)

I was deeply convinced of the great goodness of God towards me all my life, particularly in that He had given His Son to die for me. I had a far clearer view of my sins, particularly my base ingratitude towards Him. These discoveries quite broke my heart. (*T. Olivers*, 1725–1799.)

(ii.) It is a conviction of Righteousness through Christ (v. 10).

The Holy Ghost not merely convinces us of sin, plunging us into sorrow, but of the futility of our own efforts after real goodness, and that, in the living, ascended, mediatorial Christ alone is any hope of righteousness. (Read 1 Cor. i. 30; 11 Cor. v. 20; Phil. iii. 9.) In other words, He shows us 'to our great and endless comfort' that the holy, meek, unspotted Saviour has made an Atonement for us, which has been accepted of God, and for the sake of which we are forgiven freely, and counted as righteous before God, on the exercise of penitent trust in Jesus.

I resolved by the grace of God to seek this faith unto the end: 1. By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or part upon my own works of righteousness: on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up. 2. By adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace, a continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me: a trust in Him, as my Christ, my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption. (*John Wesley.*)

It is made quite certain that His atonement for us is accepted by God, because Christ has gone to His Father and we behold Him no more on earth ; for He stands at the right hand of God, in the place of honour ! The Spirit enables us by faith to penetrate the heavens, and see the ascended Lord our Righteousness.

I cried out, so that others might hear (being pierced to the heart with the sword of the Spirit), ' God be merciful to me, a sinner ! ' No sooner had I expressed these words but by the eye of faith (not with my bodily eyes) I saw Christ, my Advocate, at the right hand of God, making intercession for me. I believed He loved me and gave Himself for me. In an instant the Lord filled my soul with divine love. Tears of joy and sorrow ran mingled down my cheeks. Oh, what sweet distress was this ! (*George Shadford,* 1739–1816.)

He ever lives above,
For me to intercede,
His all-redeeming love,
His precious blood to plead :
His blood atoned for all our race,
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

The Father hears Him pray,
His dear Anointed One :
He cannot turn away
The presence of His Son ;
His Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God. (*C. Wesley.*)

(iii.) It is a conviction of Judgement by Christ (v. 11).

The Holy Spirit impresses the mind with a solemn thought of ' the ineffable rightness, certainty, and eternity of the *judicial ruin* of sin and all that sides with sin—a ruin already in effect accomplished by the personal triumph of the Son of God

over the world's prince and god.' We are led to see the doom of sin in the judgement that has already overwhelmed Satan. (Read John xii. 31; Luke x. 18; Jude 6.) Perhaps the most awful glimpse we have in Scripture of the punishment of the impenitent is in the words of Matt, xxv. 41, where it is said they shall share the doom of 'the devil and his angels.' Some souls do not seem to be affected by any sense of terror of God's anger against sin: they are so constituted that this thought does not appeal to them; but even in these instances the fact of judgement and of retribution exercises a sobering restraint on the life. No life can be frivolous or selfish which is passed under the shadow of the great white throne of judgement. But many souls can only be awakened to concern by a conviction of the 'terror of the Lord' and of the consequences of unrepented sin. In such cases the Holy Ghost convinces of the solemn reality of judgement.

I was convinced that if I died in the state wherein I was, I should be miserable for ever. The thoughts of death and judgement now struck me with terrible fear. I had a keen apprehension of the wrath of God and of the fiery indignation due to sinners. Such was the darkness I was in, such my consciousness of guilt and the just displeasure of Almighty God, that I could find no rest day or night, either for soul or body. (*Richard Whatcoat*, 1736–1806.)

II. The Order in which the Holy Spirit Produces these Convictions.

In actual experience we find that the order varies.

1. Sometimes the Holy Ghost begins with the conviction of sin, as in the passage we are considering. This creation of the sense of guilt is often 'the

decisive *first* handling of the soul, so far as we can estimate such facts, by the great Regenerator.' In some religious service, or in solitude, the Spirit gives us an insight into our sinfulness and of the necessity of pardon. 'Paul was convinced of sin, and so were Augustine and Luther, and Hooker and Pascal, and Bunyan and Wesley, and Simeon and Chalmers. The man who knows little of conviction of sin, as a genuine element in personal experience, may be many good things, but I do not think he can be a deep Christian' (*Moule*). It is this conviction which makes the 'blood of Christ' 'precious' to us, and makes our religion 'strike root downward.' Still, religion does not always start with it: it may come later, 'stage by stage, in intervals and developments of self-discovery.'

John Wesley had been for many years 'a servant' of God, to use his own phrase, before he realized conviction of the sin of unbelief. Indeed this experience came in great poignancy on the very eve of his entering into the liberty of God's children. He writes 'How am I fallen from the glory of God! I feel I am sold under sin. All my works, all my righteousness, need an atonement for themselves. So that my mouth is stopped. I have nothing to plead. God is holy: I am unholy. God is a consuming fire: I am altogether a sinner, meet to be consumed. Yet I hear a voice (and is it not the voice of God?) saying, 'Believe and thou shalt be saved.'

2. In other cases the Holy Ghost begins the work of personal salvation by the conviction of righteousness. He draws us to Christ by giving us a vision of the 'love and loveliness' made possible through our Redeemer. That vision of the beauty of goodness may make its first appeal to us in the life of Christ or even in that of a real Christian.

Many years ago a young man well known to the writer stood looking at the statue of 'Albert the Good,' near St. George's Hall, Liverpool. As he did so a strong impulse to make his own life noble seized upon him—a 'conviction of righteousness' filled his heart: and not long after, he openly gave himself to Christ that he might attain his ideal.

Or, perhaps, a heart is convinced of the excellence of righteousness by the thought of the happiness it produces.

The first time I entered a Methodist house they laboured to convince me that I was a sinner, and in danger of eternal death if I did not repent. All they said made not the least impression. As I was about to withdraw one asked me, 'Are you happy?' I answered from the dictates of my conscience, 'No.' She then showed me the true way of obtaining the happiness I wanted. Every word sunk deep into my mind, and from that moment I never lost my convictions nor my resolution to be truly devoted to God. (*George Story*, 1738–1818.)

3. In yet other instances the Spirit begins by the conviction of judgement. He inspires a holy fear, and from it springs at last true repentance.

At about eight or nine years of age, being very ill and likely to die, I was awfully afraid of another world: for I felt my heart very wicked, and my conscience smote me for many things that I had done amiss. (*George Shadford.*)

I was afraid to shut my eyes lest I should awake in hell. (*John Haime*, 1710–1784.)

4. But, in whatever way, the Holy Spirit begins the work of conversion, at last, in every heart will be found, although in different degrees and manifestations, the threefold conviction of Sin and Righteousness and Judgement. These convictions 'are

united like chain-shot, so that whichever one 'first enters the heart the other must certainly follow.'

III. The Sum of the Whole Matter.

Let us each pray for this operation of the Spirit :

1. *In our own heart.* (*a*) Are we unconverted? If so let us ask Christ to show us by His Spirit our need of salvation, whatever the order in which He may begin His work. Only those who feel that need will come to Christ. (*b*) Are we converted? We still need an ever deepening sense of the great *realities*—Sin, Righteousness, and Judgement. Then thankfully shall we cleave to Christ as our Saviour from sin, our Source of righteousness, our Absolver in the day of Judgement.

2. *In every human heart.* 'God loved the world with a saving love,' and it is nothing strange that the Holy Spirit should strive to bring the world to Him who died for it! The power of the Holy Spirit is as mighty to convince now as it was in the days of the Apostles. Confidence in this truth is the secret of the Church's strength in seeking the salvation of the world.

> Thou Spirit of the Lord, go forth,
> Call in the south, wake up the north :
> In every clime, from sun to sun,
> Gather God's children into one. (*Montgomery.*)

II

The Paraclete

O come, Creator Spirit! come,
Vouchsafe to make our minds Thy home:
And with Thy heavenly grace fulfil
The hearts Thou madest at Thy will:
Thou that art named the Paraclete,
The Gift of God, His Spirit sweet:
The living Fountain, Fire, and Love,
And gracious Unction from above. (*F. W. Faber.*)

And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth (*John xiv.* 16, 17. *See also xiv.* 26; *xv.* 26; *xvi.* 7.)

There has been much learned controversy as to the meaning of the Greek word translated 'Comforter' in the passages of St. John's Gospel above-named. As shown in the margin of the Revised Version opinion has varied between the translations, 'Comforter,' 'Advocate,' and 'Helper.' Each of these translations of the Greek word 'paraclete' contains an element of the meaning, but not one of them by itself entirely represents it. 'The word "paraclete" literally signifies one who is called to the side of another, as a friend in trouble, danger, or difficulty, or as an ally in time of war. Later it took on a legal sense indicating an advocate who pleads for another before a judge.' The real key to the meaning of the word is found in Christ's own phrase, where He speaks of the Holy Spirit as '*another* Paraclete,' i.e. not a Paraclete of another kind, but a second

similar to Christ Himself, having 'affinity of essence' with Him (*Chrysostom*). The Holy Spirit is Christ's 'other self'; He is to take Christ's place (John xvi. 7). Whatever Christ was to His disciples, while present with them, that the Holy Spirit was to be to them, when He went away. The difference would only be that the second Paraclete would be with them '*for ever*,' and should be '*in*' them (John xiv. 16–17), an abiding and eternal Presence. If we learn what Christ was as Paraclete to His disciples we see what the Spirit is as 'another Paraclete.' It needs all the words suggested by our revisers of the New Testament, 'Advocate,' 'Helper,' 'Comforter,' to express the meaning; no single word is adequate. We will deal with them in what seems on the whole to be their sequence in Christian experience.

I. The Holy Spirit as Paraclete is our Advocate.

That we may gain a true idea of the Spirit's office as Advocate it is necessary to consider Christ's work in the same capacity. In 1 John ii. 1 Christ is expressly called a Paraclete and the word is rendered 'Advocate': 'If any man sin we have a Paraclete (an Advocate) with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.' He pleads our cause with God by presenting Himself as our Substitute and Atonement. In this advocacy the Holy Ghost has no part: as far as sin is concerned the only Paraclete, the sole Advocate before God is Christ. But Christ is set forth in Scripture as our Advocate in another sense, that of intercessory prayer. We see this exemplified in His sublime High Priestly intercession (John xvii.),

and we are touched to find that He interceded for His disciples singly and by name (Luke xxii. 32). His advocacy of our cause is carried into heaven itself: 'He maketh intercession for us' (Rom. viii. 34), for ever praying that God's blessing may rest upon us. This form of advocacy we are expressly told is exercised by the Holy Spirit: 'He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God' (Rom. viii. 27). The same Greek word is used to describe the intercession or advocacy of Christ and that of the Spirit, pointing to essential similarity of office. What is this similarity? It is that as Christ our Advocate takes our part in heaven the Spirit does so on earth, in our hearts. Both our Advocates identify themselves with our cause.

1. The Holy Ghost pleads on our behalf against the charges of Satan when he would cast us into despair, or of conscience when it disturbs the peace we have through pardon. Luther's marginal note to John xiv. 16, is here very illuminating. We translate it thus: 'A paraclete is an advocate, a pleader or helper at the tribunal of law, who comforts, strengthens, and helps the guilty. So the Holy Spirit acts on our behalf in our conscience, as we stand before the bar of God, against our sins and the accusations of the devil.' As Christ in the presence of God sets His sacrificial merit against our sin, so does the Spirit in our heart set against our doubts and fears the remembrance of the atoning love of our Saviour. To every accusation He gives us the sufficient answer, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin'; to every fear He enables us to reply, 'God is love.'

Christ is our Advocate on high:
Thou art our Advocate within;
O plead the truth, and make reply
To every argument of sin. (*A. H. Vine.*)

2. But the likeness of the advocacy of Christ and that of the Holy Ghost is even more intimate. It has been finely said that as Christ stood for us our substitute in death, so the Holy Spirit stands for us our substitute in prayer (*W. R. Nicoll*). When our prayer rises up before God acceptably it is really not our prayer but the prayer of the Holy Spirit. He breathes holy desire into the heart, and makes it so intense that it 'cannot be uttered,' for the desire of the finite for the infinite is unspeakable: though 'we know not how to pray as we ought' He teaches us how to ask for the things that are 'according to the will of God'; He 'helpeth our infirmity' so that our desires, as far as they can be expressed, are fitly uttered: in one word the prayer is His; it is His inspiration; it comes through our voice; it is counted ours, and prevails inevitably in bringing us the blessing. 'He that searcheth the hearts' only fulfils His own will and wish when He answers the Spirit-inspired prayer. Thus the Spirit's prayer is substituted for ours. This is the fact which lies at the root of the phrase 'praying in the Spirit' (Eph. vi. 18; Jude 20); it is the converse of the truth that the Spirit prays in us, as in His Temple. 'The perfect Spirit is as wings to the soul' (*Tatian*). Without these 'wings' we could not soar up to God in prayer. Our 'infirmities,' the weakness of the body, the feebleness of our spiritual desire, the wandering of our minds, the irresoluteness of our wills, these and

many other 'infirmities' would bind us to earth. But the 'Spirit helpeth our infirmity,' and in the urgency of our soul's yearning which He creates in us we surmount them all and hold fellowship with God.

(1) The Spirit stirs up the soul's affections. As the strings under the musician's hands stir and speak harmoniously, so also the saint's affections at the secret touch of the Spirit. In a word, He stirs up affections suitable to every part of prayer, enabling the gracious soul to confess sin with an aching heart, to supplicate mercy with an inward feeling of his wants, and to praise God with a heart carried on high upon the wings of love and joy. (2) The Spirit regulates and directs our affections, helping our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought (Rom. viii. 26). We are prone to overbend the bow in some petitions, and want strength to bend it enough in others: one while we over-shoot the mark, praying absolutely for that which we should ask conditionally: another time we shoot beside the mark, either by praying for what God hath not promised or too selfishly for that which is promised. In this respect He by His secret whispers instructs us. (3) He fills the Christian with a humble boldness in prayer. He easeth the heart of fear to draw near to God when the sinner remembers the horrid sins he hath perpetrated against Him. He assures him that God forgives him, that He takes him for His dear child—He seals it with a kiss of love upon his heart, whereby the Christian is able to call God Father, and to expect the kind welcome of a child at His hands. (*W. Gurnall*, 1616–1679.)

II. The Holy Spirit, our Paraclete, is a Helper.

The first Paraclete, our Lord, was the Divine Helper of His disciples, in the experiences of their own hearts and in their work for God in the world. The second, abiding Paraclete, the Holy Spirit,

continues this assistance. How He helps in prayer we have just seen. The Saviour now shows how He helps us in our Christian service.

(i.) The Spirit equips us for service.

1. The Holy Ghost is *our Teacher.* This is distinctly affirmed of Him as the Paraclete (John xiv. 26). (*a*) His work is to ' bring to remembrance ' all that Christ said and taught. The promise guarantees to us the accuracy of the report given of Christ's teaching in the Gospels. In its essential meaning the promise is made to all believers who to-day claim its fulfilment in faith. What Christian cannot testify that, as he needed a word of comfort in a time of distress, the Spirit of God has brought to memory some tender saying of Christ to be a sufficient solace? What worker for Christ cannot remember occasions when, as he sought to guide a perplexed soul, the Holy Ghost presented to his recollection the appropriate word of Jesus? (*b*) But the Paraclete's help goes further. There were truths which Christ did not teach; His disciples were not able to bear them (John xvi. 12). The Holy Spirit is to make known to believers these reserved truths and indeed ' all the truth '; ' He shall teach you all things ' (John xiv. 26; xvi. 13). ' The Saviour discoursed with the disciples as with men who were not yet able to receive the full truth, condescending to the meanness of their understanding; but the Holy Spirit holds intercourse with those who are being perfected ' (*Theognostus*). As a father, looking upon the world with all its problems, knows that his child cannot receive or bear a knowledge that would break his heart, and

so leaves it to be learned as the child matures, Christ veiled some truth from His disciples. But 'the Spirit of truth,' as the Church grows stronger and wiser, for ever unfolds the truth in wider meanings, step by step, until she shall perfectly know the complete sphere of God's will. Meanwhile each disciple shall be taught by the Spirit all truth essential to his salvation and service for Christ. Even 'the things that are to come' beyond death, although largely unknown, are only so because they are 'hid in excess of light.' From day to day the sincere believer shall also know by the Spirit's teaching the way he ought to take in all life's duty, and shall have all necessary practical wisdom.

2. The Holy Spirit helps us by *bearing witness of Christ* (John xv. 26; compare carefully, 1 John v. 7–11). (1) This witness the Paraclete bears *to* us. We cannot know Christ for ourselves without the Spirit's witness (1 Cor. xii. 3). The New Testament inspired by Him is His testimony to Christ, but we cannot know Christ even in reading it unless the Holy Spirit bears witness directly to our own heart concerning Him. We only come to see and know Jesus as He really is when the indwelling Spirit of God interprets Him to us. Till then Christ may be a human teacher, a great name, even an example, but our Saviour never. Having this witness in our hearts we are impervious to doubt concerning out Lord (1 John v. 9–10). No criticism 'of this and that book's date,' no query of science, can shake the peace of the disciple who has in his heart the testimony of the Holy Spirit, through the experience of the Saviour's grace and blessing.

I did not wholly understand the greatness and sufficiency of His meritorious sufferings, nor was my own wretchedness and inability sufficiently obvious to me. I did what I could to be saved, *until one extraordinary day*, when I was so much affected by what my Creator had suffered for me that I shed an abundance of tears, and attached and joined myself more closely to Him. (*Zinzendorf.*)

(2) This witness the Paraclete also bears *through* us. Having received the witness in ourselves we 'also bear witness' (1 John i. 2), and in this work He co-operates with us (Acts v. 32). Our lives and our lips are to bear testimony of Christ. Our characters are to reflect His beauty, our mouths (Rom. x. 10), are to speak His praise. If we are to win the world for Christ we must bear witness to Him and of Him; nothing else will avail. But if we are faithful and holy witnesses, the Spirit of God will add His testimony to ours so that men cannot resist.

The next day I met the superintendent of the mission, and I said, 'You had a wonderful meeting last night.' 'Well,' he said, 'I simply held up Jesus Christ, and it pleased the Holy Spirit to illumine His face, and men saw and believed.' It was a unique way of putting it, but it was true to the essential facts of the case. (*R. A. Torrey, D.D.*)

(ii.) The Paraclete makes our service effective.

This brings us to another phase of the Spirit's work as our Helper (John xvi. 8–11). When Christ gave His command, 'Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations,' He added a promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (Matt. xxviii. 19–20). This promise of His continued presence is fulfilled in the help of the Spirit,

who, to use Tertullian's phrase, is 'the Vicar of Christ,' His vicegerent on earth. Through His help alone is the conquest of the world for God possible. If we keep to the word 'Advocate' as the translation of 'Paraclete' we may say that the Spirit advocates the claims of God in the world, in all human hearts. Wherever the gospel is preached 'He will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.' Sometimes His conviction *precedes* the messenger of salvation who finds the heart already tuned to respond to His call; so the Spirit who guided Philip had made ready the eunuch for the truth (Acts viii.). This is often the case now, and human hearts all around us, made fit by the Spirit, only wait the fitting word of teaching. At other times He *accompanies* the worker, and makes His witness mighty. 'While Peter yet spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word' (Acts x. 44). Often yet does He come in power on those to whom His servants speak. There are many illustrations of this fact in Wesley's *Journal*. Take one:

> April 11, 1751. The barber who shaved me said, 'Sir, I praise God on your behalf. When you was at Bolton last I was one of the most eminent drunkards in all the town; but I came to listen at the window, and God struck me to the heart. Yesterday, twelvemonth, God gave me faith; and His love has ever since filled my heart.'

Or take a more modern illustration:

> I had not spoken in this strain more than fifteen minutes when an awful solemnity fell upon the congregation: the people began to fall from their seats in every direction, and cried for mercy. Nearly the whole congregation was thus at prayer in less than two minutes from the first

moment of this visitation. My heart was so overflowing with joy that I could scarce contain myself. I turned to a young man who was praying for himself, and preached Jesus to him. As soon as I got his attention to the cross he believed, and was quiet for a moment: then he broke out into prayer for others. I then turned to another, with the same result, and so on. The meeting went on all night and far into the next day, and the work proved lasting. (*Autobiography of C. G. Finney.*)

Even when the Spirit does not so manifestly go with the word of Christ He always accompanies it where His servants appropriate His help in obedient faith, with power *adequate* for the conversion of all who are honest hearers. He stands by every Christian worker, an Ally in the fight, a Comrade in the toil. The Holy Ghost is that 'hand of the Lord' which was with the scattered and persecuted Christians when at Antioch they preached the Lord Jesus, 'and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord'(Acts xi. 21). What sinner can resist the 'hand of the Lord' when 'the Lord hath made bare His holy arm' (Isa. lii. 9)? Nay, even 'the finger of God' suffices to cast out devils (Luke xi. 20), and that 'finger' is expressly termed the Spirit of God (Matt. xii. 28). We cannot doubt that the hand of God is ever operating in the world, not only in connexion with evangelistic work, but at the centre of all great and genuine social reforms. The only, but sufficient hope, of a regenerated world is in the world-wide operations of the Paraclete. When the Church is weak to uplift mankind it is because she is not working in reliance upon and alliance with the Divine Hand. The resources of the omnipotent Spirit ever wait only for believing prayer, and they ensure victory.

'Behold, the Lord's Hand is not shortened, that it cannot save' (Isa. lix. 1).

III. The Holy Spirit, our Paraclete, is the Comforter.

In this respect again He is our Lord's representative. The work of Christ was to give comfort (John xiv. 1; Matt. xi. 28–30). His 'other Self,' the Spirit, conveys 'the comfort that is in Christ' (Phil. ii. 1) to all the saints of God. Indeed we read explicitly of 'the comfort of the Holy Ghost' (Acts ix. 31). A careful student of the New Testament will find that comfort is almost its chief and most precious burden.[1] The terms 'Advocate' and 'Helper' as translations of 'Paraclete' are not so comprehensive as the term 'Comforter'; their meaning is implied in it. The aim, the result of the Spirit's advocacy and help, is comfort. If only one word may be used to render the Greek we venture to affirm that the ancient phrase of 'Comforter' is the most suitable. The 'paraclete' is one called to one's side; the essential idea of comfort is companionship in the time of trial. There is a touch of inspiration in the translation, and we rejoice that the revisers have allowed it to stand.

> Be with me when no other friend
> The mystery of my heart can share:
> And be Thou known, when fears transcend,
> By Thy best name of Comforter. (*A. H. Vine.*)

The Spirit begins His consolation in the first moments of our new life, as He assures us of pardon.

[1] See marginal references to 1 Cor. xiv. 3 in 'Revised Version with fuller references.'

From that hour my soul received comfort, and I was more and more assured that I had an Advocate with the Father, and that I was fully reconciled to God by His blood. (*David Schneider in Wesley's Journal, August,* 1738.)

In this journey God gave me full assurance that my sins were forgiven; and ever since it has been confirmed more and more by my receiving from Him every day fresh supplies of strength and comfort. (*Christopher Demuth: ibid.*)

All through our Christian career the same consolation is ministered to us. When we feel our insufficiency for our work, in the hour of loneliness, in sleepless nights, in seasons of fear, in times of depression, in the experience of grief, in the moment of death, the Spirit is with us as the Paraclete, in every-day speech, as our 'Stand-by,' or our 'Part-taker,' not far away, but at our side, and, better still, in our hearts their true Comforter.

How can we ever be lonely, when this best of all friends is with us?' I recall one night walking up and down the deck of a storm-tossed steamer in the South Seas. Most of my family were 18,000 miles away; the remaining member of my family was not with me. I was pacing the deck alone, and the thought came to me, 'Here you are, all alone.' Then another thought came, 'I am not alone; by my side, as I walk this deck in the loneliness and the storm, walks the Holy Spirit.' And He was enough.

The Comforter can cure a breaking heart. How many such hearts there are in this world of death and separation! But the Holy Spirit can fill every nook and corner of the empty and aching heart. I said something like this at a meeting in Glasgow. A sad-faced Christian widow came to me and said: 'Just a year ago to-day my dear husband was taken from me. You have given me the word I need.' A year-and-a-half later I was on the yacht of a friend

on the Clyde. A little boat put out from the shore, and this very lady stepped out of it and came on board the yacht. The first thing she said was, 'The thought you gave me that day in Glasgow has been with me ever since, and the Holy Spirit does satisfy me and fill my heart.' (*Abridged from 'The Holy Spirit': R. A. Torrey, D.D.*)

St. Augustine calls the Holy Ghost our 'sweetest Comforter.' There are no consolations like His.

They are wondrous thoughts of Jesus,
They are presences of God,
Giving zest to weary sadness,
Or strange sweetness to the rod,
Filling full of heavenly sunbeams
Sorrow's dark and lone abode.

For they come into our spirits
With a soft and winning might,
And they make our dead look brighter
In the waking hours of night,
And they gently turn our darkness
Into depths of tenderest light. (*Faber.*)

III

The Witness

Cheered by a Witness so divine,
Unwavering I believe;
And Abba, Father! humbly cry:
Nor can the sign deceive. (*Doddridge.*)

The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are children of God (*Rom. viii.* 16).

We have seen in the preceding study that it is part of the Paraclete's mission to bear witness to Christ as Son of God and Saviour of men. Now we turn to think of His work as He bears witness of the believer's personal acceptance into the family of God. The witness of the Spirit in this aspect comprises a cluster of definite spiritual experiences—pardon, adoption, regeneration.

I. The Witness of the Spirit to Forgiveness.

The moment the soul of the penitent sinner casts itself wholly upon God's promised mercy he is forgiven for all his past sin. This is the constant assurance of Scripture (Isa. lv. 7; 1 John i. 9). A change at once takes place in the attitude of God to that soul: the sin is blotted out: God is reconciled: His anger ceases and approval takes its place. Of course, the act of forgiveness takes place in the mind of God. Before the soul can be at rest the knowledge of the divine pardon must be conveyed to it, and only

God can give this information of what has passed in His own heart. Faith takes God at His word, and believes that He does forgive: this is the assurance of faith. But the Paraclete, who knoweth the things of God, gives a clearer assurance than this. He makes known to the subconscious soul that all is right between the sinner and God: He bestows freedom from condemnation (Rom. viii. 1).

As Jesus was wont to say to penitent hearts, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' so speaks His other Self, the Spirit, to such hearts to-day. This assurance is given in the hidden depths of the soul, out of observation in the subconsciousness: like the course of the wind, Christ tells us, is the way of the Spirit, invisible and inscrutable (John iii. 8). Yet so great, so momentous a transaction must make itself felt: it must rise into our consciousness. It does this in producing a sense of joy or peace, more or less marked, suddenly or gradually: the burden of guilt strangely disappears, or dissolves, the unrest vanishes. Sometimes the uprush of the great experience from the subconsciousness into the conscious life is attended by marvellous phenomena. In ordinary life, and in other spheres than that of religion, it is a frequent occurrence that 'subconscious mentation,' especially in certain physical states, appears in consciousness as visible sights and audible voices. The writer remembers that when he was ill he often heard a peal of bells which had no existence at the moment, save in the deeps of the subliminal mind. Thus, the rising up from that area into conscious observation and feeling of the tremendous fact of divine pardon is sometimes so vivid that it appears to assume the form of a vision

or a spoken word. It does not follow that because this experience is now capable of a psychological explanation, it is any the less a divine operation. The Spirit may choose to make God's forgiveness known along these well-known and partly-explicable psychological channels, should it appear, in certain cases, best to Him to do so. We have no right to 'think that God is eliminated from them, and that He cannot give a revelation through them: this is making a statement for which we have no evidence. Our modern science only designates method, not cause' (*Psychological Phenomena of Christianity: Dr. Cutten*). Such experiences in the light of modern psychology cannot be regarded, as formerly they were, as the delusive fancies of excited fanatics. 'They open out the possibility of other orders of truth, in which, so far as anything in us vitally responds to them, we may freely continue to have faith' (*Varieties of Religious Experience: James*). They are doubtless the Spirit's shortest way into some minds. John Wesley gives a statement of the doctrine of the Spirit's witness to forgiveness which includes this type of experience: the passage, as a whole, when read in view of modern mental science, is probably the most complete and beautiful setting of the subject in theological literature. It may profitably guide the course of the present study.

'By the "testimony of the Spirit" I mean an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God: that "Jesus Christ hath loved me and given Himself for me": that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God. I do not mean hereby that the Spirit

of God testifies this by any outward voice; no, nor always by an inward voice, although He may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose that He always applies to the heart (though He often does so) one or more texts of Scripture. But He so works upon the soul by His immediate influence, and by a strong though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm; the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that all his "iniquities are forgiven, and his sin covered."'

The 'inexplicable operation' of which Wesley speaks takes place in the secret depths, the subconsciousness of the soul, where the divine Spirit has contact with the human spirit: it is in the nature of the case an impenetrable mystery. But as the Spirit's influence thence urges its way upward into realization or conscious experience it manifests itself in various ways. This we shall attempt to show in the order of thought suggested by Wesley's words.

1. The witness of the Spirit may be realized in *an audible or visible manner*. As Wesley suggests, it may take the semblance of an outward or inward voice: sometimes it seems to be a vision. St. Paul is an example of both: he heard the voice, and saw the vision of Christ. Similar experiences came to Joan of Arc, John Bunyan, and many others. Some seem to hear an outward voice.

'One Sunday morning I was just going to open my Bible, when a voice (whether inward or outward I cannot tell) seemed to say very loud, "God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven thee." I started up, took the candle and searched all about, to see if any one was near, but there was none.

I then sat down, with such peace and joy in my soul as cannot be described.' The 'voice' spoke three times. (*Letter from a Quakeress in Wesley's Journal: Standard Edition, vol.* iii. *p.* 508.)

I wept aloud with joy, and remained for some time too much overwhelmed with the baptism of the Spirit to do anything but pour out my soul to God. The Spirit seemed to say to me, 'Will you doubt?' I cried, 'No! I will not doubt: I cannot doubt.' It was, in fact, impossible for me to doubt that the Spirit of God had taken possession of my soul. (*C. G. Finney.*)

Others believe that they hear an inward voice.

I had not walked far before it was strongly suggested to my mind, 'Jesus Christ died for the vilest sinner.' I immediately replied, 'Then I am the wretch for whom He died.' In that moment it seemed to me as though a new creation had taken place. My soul was filled with light and love. I could no more doubt of my acceptance with God through Christ, than I could of my own existence. (*Peter Jaco, an early Methodist preacher.*)

In other instances the Spirit of God gives assurance through an apparent vision in waking or in sleeping hours. Most evangelical pastors have met with such cases.

As I looked up to heaven I saw the clouds open exceeding bright, and I saw Jesus hanging on the cross. At the same moment these words were applied to my heart: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' All guilt was gone, and my soul was filled with unutterable peace. (*Sampson Staniforth, an early Methodist preacher.*)

In Liverpool I frequently visited a dying drayman. He was exceptionally ignorant of the Bible, having attended no place of worship since Sunday School days. It seemed

impossible to make him understand the nature of salvation. At length, after much perplexity on his part, he assured me with joy that Jesus Christ had appeared to him when he was wide awake, and given him a smile of pardon. He died in perfect peace. (*J. H. Hodson.*)

Sometimes the vision appears as a divine radiance.

Just as I came to the bottom of the hill a ray of light, resembling the shining of a star, descended through a small opening in the heavens, and instantaneously shone upon me. In that instant my burden fell off, and I was so elevated that I felt as if I could literally fly away to heaven. (*Thomas Olivers, an early Methodist preacher.*)

There was no fire, no light in the room; nevertheless, it appeared as if it were perfectly light. It seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me that it was a wholly mental state: it seemed that I saw Him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at His feet. (*C. G. Finney.*)

2. A frequent form of the conscious witness of the Spirit is *an intellectual perception of saving truth.* He brings home to the soul the meaning of 'one or more texts of Scripture.'

Wesley's own experience (May 24, 1738) was of this kind essentially, although an emotional element was also found in it. His mind had been prepared by meditation on the 'great and precious promises,' during the early part of the day, and his heart softened by the music of an anthem in St. Paul's in the afternoon: in the evening, as he listened to Luther's explanation of saving faith, he saw the truth, and with 'a heart strangely warmed' received the assurance that his sins were taken

away. Sometimes the mind is suddenly illuminated to understand the way of personal salvation, as set forth in texts of Scripture.

When I came to those words, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,' as I fixed my eyes upon them, in a moment my darkness was removed, and the Spirit did bear witness with my spirit that I was a child of God. In the same instant I was filled with unspeakable joy and peace in believing. (*Richard Whatcoat, an early Methodist preacher.*)

Generally, however, the witness comes gradually, especially when there has been religious training and a virtuous life. This is the Spirit's normal method, we may venture to say.

I did not forget prayer and to study my Bible. Gradually the mists rolled away. I saw myself as God saw me, as a sinner indeed, only to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, that cleanseth from all sin, and as I rested my all upon the Saviour the burden of sin rolled away, and I realized the glorious truth that He had borne my sins, and that by His stripes I was healed. (*Agnes Weston, LL.D.*)

I diligently searched for the hidden treasure at all times and in all places, and I soon found it. One night when walking by the old church, and asking myself, 'What is it to know my sins forgiven?' and earnestly imploring the Lord to tell His secret to me, as I turned into Paradise Square (the best known, and also the worst locality in Sheffield) it was as though the scales fell from my eyes, and I saw the Saviour scourged and slain: then, as though for the first time in my life, the thought flashed across my mind, 'Why did Christ, being innocent, suffer all this?' Just as I entered Silver Street (one of the shabbiest streets in the town, but ever after beautiful to me as the golden-paved streets of the New Jerusalem) the answer came—'He suffered thus for *me*': then followed the glorious conclusion, 'If for *me*, then I am free, my sins are pardoned,' and as I believed,

I felt the blood applied
And knew my sins forgiven.
(*Autobiography of Rev. Thomas Nightingale.*)

3. The witness of the Spirit is finally realized in consciousness *through the emotions*. By His 'inexplicable operation He creates in us a sweet calm, the heart resting in the arms of Jesus and the sinner being clearly satisfied that his iniquities are forgiven.' 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God though our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. v. 1). All other influences of the Spirit are but preparatory to His gift of peace. Whether He makes the divine favour known by voice or vision, or through an illuminated understanding, it is only that He may fill the heart with serenity and rest: that is the climax of His work. The experience of peace is the highest, truest, and most trustworthy form of assurance. The peace which comes through pardon is so deep that it can only be traced to God as its source. It may be realized after a stormy time of soul-distress, or without any previous convulsions of feeling through childlike, penitent trust in Christ, especially in the case of religiously-trained young people.

While listening to it (a sermon on Christ's ability to save to the uttermost) my weary spirit *rested* itself. From this time my mind went slowly onward filled with a calm contentment. (*Elizabeth Prentiss.*)

The repose of my mind was unspeakably great. I can never describe it in words. The thought of God was sweet to my mind, and the most profound spiritual tranquility had taken full possession of me. (*C. G. Finney*).

How can a sinner know
His sins on earth forgiven?
How can my gracious Saviour show
My name inscribed in heaven?

We who in Christ believe
That He for us hath died,
We all His unknown peace receive,
And feel His blood applied. (*Wesley.*)

II. The Witness of the Spirit to Adoption.

The ministry of the Holy Ghost does not cease with the assurance of forgiveness: to this He adds, concurrently in fact, but separately in thought, the confidence that the penitent believer is received into the family of God's accepted children, according to the promise, 'I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters' (2 Cor. vi. 17–18). This act of adoption, like that of pardon, takes place in the mind of God, and the knowledge of it is borne into the soul inexplicably. In the subconscious life the Spirit creates the condition of filial relationship to God, the work is done silently, and out of the reach of observation: around the soul are thrown the arms of the Father's embrace: the human heart rests from its grief on the Divine Father's bosom. But so profound a change at the centre of our being must make its way into our knowledge and feeling. It rises into our consciousness as 'a loving and confiding sense of harmonious childhood to God.' This feeling is the witness of the Spirit to our adoption of which St. Paul speaks: 'Ye received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our Spirit that we are children of God' (Rom. viii. 15–16): 'Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father' (Gal. iv. 6). 'The love, the trust, the communion, the

companionship, that make up a positive filial spirit, pervade and possess the entire consciousness. Fear, recoil from the purity and greatness of the Divine Presence now strangely disappear. The glad, fearless spirit of loving childhood comes into the soul. There is begotten a clearly defined sense of being back again in the Father's family' (*The Psychology of the Christian Life: Dr. Warner*). This sense of being at home in the family of God gives a feeling of security which no sealed document could ever bring. A soul full of the realization of God's Fatherhood breathes forth its eager greeting to Him in the cry 'Abba, Father.' Each of these words, in a different language, means the same: the twofold cry is the utterance of deep emotion—the soul, like a child waking from some terrible dream to find himself in his father's arms, casting itself upon the bosom of God, with a joyous burst of recognition, 'Father, Father!' As we grow older this filial confidence becomes a greater element of the Spirit's assurance than His witness to pardon. This cry is uttered in our hearts: it is there the Spirit inspires us so to speak to God: it is His cry rising up in our voice. Because the assurance is 'in our hearts' it is subject to change. It may vary in distinctness according to the state of our hearts as influenced by bodily conditions and outward circumstances. It will burn not like a star in heaven, remote from earthly influences, without wavering, but like a flame on earth, flickering in the wind, but never blown out. The human heart is the harp on which the Holy Ghost awakes the sweet music of the cry, 'Abba, Father,' but that harp is sometimes out of tune through no fault of ours, and its response to

His hands is faltering. This need not discourage us: anon the flame will burn more brightly, the music swell forth more sweetly. Only let us beware lest the light grow dim for lack of faith in God's parental tenderness, or the music fail because the strings of the harp are jangled and harsh through laxity and sin. Oh, the blessedness of those believers who have the abiding witness of adoption!

'Just as I laid me down the Spirit was poured into my heart in such a manner that I was penetrated with a sense of it, from head to foot. I cried out, "Now I know that I am a child of God. Nobody need tell me now: I am assured of it." Filled with peace and joy I could not for some time fall on sleep for crying. When I awoke in the morning a new heaven smiled down upon a new earth.' This was in her early life: she lived to be eighty-eight, and said that she never lost this testimony at any part of her life. (*An Inner Court Worshipper, by Sarson C. J. Ingham.*)

Such assurance is the chief secret of growth in grace. All the flowers and fruits of holiness grow best in the joyous summer and sunshine of conscious acceptance with God. It is, too, an important element in Christian service. 'The joy of the Lord is our strength': we are most useful when we are most joyful in God. 'If the arm is to smite strong blows for Christ, it must smite at the bidding of a calm and light heart.' If we are always climbing up the Rock out of the waves, and never standing firmly on it, how can we have our hands free to help those who are still buffeting the breakers? Nor can anything give us victory over sorrow and affliction like this filial confidence.

When I live in a settled assurance about the state of my soul, methinks I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all

troubles : no affliction damps me ; but when I am eclipsed in my comforts I am of so fearful a spirit that I could run into a very mouse-hole. (*Hugh Latimer to Ridley.*)

Death loses its sting when we are quite sure that we are God's children, that we are only going home to the Father at eventide, and that He will rejoice to see us : unafraid we sink to our last sleep.

Whatever darkness gather
O'er coverlet or pall,
Since Thou art Abba, Father,
Why should I fear at all ?

Thou'st seen how closely, Abba, when at rest,
My child's head nestles to my breast ;
And how my arm her little form enfolds
Lest in the darkness she should feel alone ;
And how she holds
My hands, my two hands in her own.

A little easeful sighing,
And restful turning round,
And I too, on Thy love relying,
Shall slumber sound. (*William Canton.*)

III. The Witness of the Spirit to Regeneration.

Another phase of the one act of the Spirit's witness to the believer is found in the radical changes He makes in the heart and character. The whole nature is changed by a creative act : ' Wherefore if any man is in Christ there is a new creation : the old things are passed away : behold, they are become new ' (2 Cor. v. 17) : such a man is ' born anew ' (John iii. 3, 5) ; a ' new man is created ' (Eph. iv. 24). This creative process cannot be observed, nor explained ; it takes place in the sub-conscious soul, as in a secret laboratory. But the

new energy cannot do other than spring up into the consciousness of the believer, and show itself in his outward life, its manifestation being generally, though not always, moulded by his temperament. 'What is attained is often an altogether new level of spiritual vitality, a relatively heroic level, on which impossible things have become possible, and new energies and endurances are shown. The personality is changed: the man is born anew, whether or not his psychological idiosyncrasies are what give the peculiar shape to his metamorphosis' (*James: Varieties of Religious Experience*). Sin, once loved, is now hated: goodness, once despised, becomes the soul's passion. Masterful appetities are controlled, even sometimes extinguished: the inner joy transfigures the world with its own radiance, so that it seems like a new earth and a new heaven. This mighty change in some cases is instantaneous: at others it is gradually realized, perhaps with conflict. Countless illustrations of this might be given: a modern one will suffice.

He says to me, quite quietly, smiling and shaking his head in perplexity, 'It's a fair marvel: there's no mistake about that: people can get away from a lot of things, but they can't get away from conversion. No! And see what it does for a man! It *does* give him a new birth. I've still got faults, a lot of them, but I'm absolutely different from what I was before conversion. I've got different ideas about life—everything. I'm happy. I'm keen about helping others.' (*Broken Earthenware: Harold Begbie.*)

This marvellous change, this new creation in the entire conscious life, is the Spirit's witness to

regeneration. As the soul perceives the effects of the change in its own feelings and in the character and deeds of life it feels assured that the Spirit of God dwells within, as the operative source of all. It reasons that where such fruits grow the Divine Seed must be planted within: that such pure streams can only flow from the inner Well of God's Spirit; that such a new life can only spring from a new birth. St. John emphasizes this aspect of the witness of the Spirit that our sense of assurance may be drawn from the effect of the Spirit on our feeling and action. 'We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren' (1 John iii. 14); 'Hereby we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments' (1 John ii. 3); 'Hereby know we that we abide in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit' (1 John iv. 13). Thus we have the witness of our own spirit as it testifies to us of the change in our nature. We are assured that we are children of God through the testimony of our own moral judgement on our own life—'my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost' (Rom. ix. 1); 'Our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world' (2 Cor. i. 12).

To this testimony of our own spirit the Holy Spirit joins His own to the same purpose. 'The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God' (Rom. viii. 16). It is the conjoint testimony of these two witnesses, that of our own spirit and that of the Holy Ghost, which is the complete safeguard against self-delusion and mystical fanaticism. The claim to inward assurance

of acceptance by God must be corroborated by the outward sanctity of our conduct. In other words, with the witness of the Spirit to our pardon and adoption must be blended the witness of the Spirit to our regeneration. It is true not only of our Lord but of each child of God that 'there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three agree in one' (1 John v. 8): the testimony of the 'Spirit of adoption,' the cleansing water of regeneration, the atoning blood of pardon unite in the witness of the One Blessed Spirit of God.

It is only in the union of the three that we have a complete view of the truth concerning the witness of the Spirit. To use the figures which are suggested by Dr. W. B. Pope, when first the sinner exercises a trembling faith in Christ he stands, as it were, in the *court* of divine justice, pleading the atonement: here for Christ's sake he is forgiven and the Spirit gives him to feel that there is no condemnation: in the court the Spirit is the witness of pardon given *to* the sinner. The scene changes, as he stands there, and the court becomes a *house*; here the Spirit secretly assures him that he belongs to the family of God, 'crying in his heart, Abba, Father' (Gal. iv. 6): as his own spirit seeks to express itself to God the Spirit of God joins with it, and he in his own voice, filled with the 'spirit of adoption,' cries to God, 'Abba, Father' (Rom. viii. 15–16): he is made to feel at home and welcome to all the joys and safety and feasts of God's children. In the family the Spirit is the witness of adoption, borne *in* and *with* his spirit. Once more the scene changes, and the pardoned child of God finds himself

in a *temple*: here stands the altar, sprinkled with Christ's blood, to make every life laid upon it a sacrifice acceptable to God. He dedicates himself to God, placing body, soul, and spirit on the altar. The Spirit as fire falls on the gift, which is turned into His own holy flame, transformed into His likeness, its corruption purged away by the searching heat of the Holy Ghost. In the temple the Spirit is the witness to regeneration and sanctification, wrought *upon* the believer. It is the same Spirit which 'worketh all in all,' but His work assumes these different aspects. The witness of the Spirit, in all its forms, is not limited, as some suggest, to a few choice natures, temperamentally gifted for the realization of the spiritual life, with a genius for religion, or to the inner circle of eminent saints. It is the common privilege of all who are in the family of God. 'Because ye are sons,' and on that ground alone, even if we are but new-born babes, 'God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father': the earliest instinct of the child is recognition of the parent in natural life, and much more is the knowledge of the Father a first experience of God's children: it is the heritage, promised and free, of all who through faith in Christ are sons and daughters of God. The sun does not belong to a few favoured trees and flowers, but to all alike. The fruit tree laden with its autumnal wealth, the lonely pine amid Alpine snows, the stainless lily in the garden, waving its censer of perfume, the tiny daisy in the meadow, looking with meek eye to heaven, all alike can claim the sun's light and warmth for themselves in the glad cry, 'Thou art my sun.' So even the lowliest child of God, half

afraid of his bliss, may call to God, through His Spirit, 'And Thou art *my* Father!'

> In us Abba, Father! cry,
> Earnest of the bliss on high,
> Seal of immortality,
> Comforter divine. (*G. Rawson.*)

IV

The Seal

Come, Holy Spirit, seal the grace
On my expanding heart:
And show that in the Father's love
I share a filial part. (*Doddridge.*)

Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (*Eph. i.* 14).
In whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption (*Eph. iv.* 30).
God, who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 *Cor. i.* 22).

The seal is another of the symbols definitely chosen by the Spirit of inspiration Himself as representing His own operations in the believer's heart and life.

I. The Seal Itself.

What is this seal? The essential mark of a seal is that it imparts its own image or likeness to that on which it is placed, and so establishes its own validity. The image engraved on the seal was called in New Testament times 'the character.' What more appropriate figure can be used of the Holy Spirit, as He imprints His 'character' on the believer's soul? Likeness to God, the *facsimile* of the Spirit, is left on the believer by His sacred impress: the heart, sealed by the Spirit, bears 'the image of the heavenly': it is

A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine,
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine. (*C. Wesley.*)

The seal of the Spirit is, then, His work viewed as silently sanctifying the soul, through His indwelling and abiding contact with it: in a word, the seal is the indwelling Spirit of holiness. 'The Spirit is the seal which stamps the divine image on the human soul' (*Didymus, c.* A.D. 38).

I took for the symbol of my theology, a seal on which I had engraven a cross, with a heart in its centre: the cross is black to indicate the sorrows, even unto death, through which the Christian must pass, *but the heart preserves its natural colour*, for the cross does not extinguish nature: it does not kill, but give life. The heart is placed in the midst of a white rose, which signifies the joy, peace, and consolation that faith gives, but *the rose is white and not red*, because it is not the joy and peace of the world, but that of spirits. (*Martin Luther.*)

Luther's seal is an emblem of the seal of the Spirit; for its 'character,' the image it imprints, is death to sin, life to God, and spiritual purity and peace. Such is the experience of all believers, in proportion to their faith.

Now as Christian stood looking and weeping, behold, three shining ones came to him and saluted him with, 'Peace be to thee.' The first said to him, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee' (Mark ii. 5); the second stripped him of his rags and clothed him with a change of raiment (Zech. iii. 4); the third set a mark upon his forehead and gave him a roll with a seal upon it (Eph. i. 13), which he bade him look upon as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate. (*Bunyan.*)

I said 'I can, I will, I do believe in the only true God, and in Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. I am saved through faith in the blood of the Lamb. The spirit of adoption is come. I can now cry "Abba, Father." The same Spirit beareth witness with my spirit that I am a child

of God.' *I then found a glorious and undeniable change.* God, Christ, angels, men, heaven, earth, the whole creation appeared to me in a new light, and stood related to me in a manner I never knew before. I found love to my God, to His yoke, to His cross, to His saints, and to His friends and enemies. (*Christopher Hopper, an early Methodist preacher.*)

It is vain to profess to have the Spirit's witness to pardon and adoption unless we have the seal of the Spirit—His inward, sanctifying work.

O may Thy Spirit seal
  Our souls unto that day,
With all Thy fullness fill,
  And then transport away!
Away to our eternal rest,
Away to our Redeemer's breast!

(*C. Wesley.*)

II. The Significance of the Seal.

In Scripture we find the *protecting* seal, the pledge of inviolability (Matt. xxvii. 66): the *ratifying* seal, giving validity (John iii. 33): and the *proprietary* seal, the token of ownership, which is the dominant thought in the texts we are now dealing with.

1. The seal of the Spirit is *the proof that the believer is God's possession.*

The allusion to the seal as a pledge of purchase would be peculiarly intelligible in Ephesus, where an extensive trade in timber was carried on. The merchant, after selecting his timber, stamped it with his own signet, the acknowledged sign of ownership. He often did not carry off his possession at the time, but in due course sent his agent with the signet, who, finding the timber marked with a corresponding impress, claimed and brought it away for his master's use. (*E. H. Bickersteth.*)

Christ was 'sealed' by God (John vi. 27): the reference is to the descent of the Spirit on our Lord at His baptism: the alighting Dove was a seal, a confirmation of the accompanying words, 'This is my beloved Son.' The same thought of divine ownership is found in 2 Tim. ii. 19. To-day we often use the seal in the same way, as an expression of proprietorship. Each child of God, by the indwelling Spirit, is sealed as His own, His purchased possession, His peculiar treasure, His by more sacred ties than is the world at large.

2. The emblem is full of *comforting lessons*. (1) One suggestion is that of security. We are safe because we belong to God, out of whose hand none can pluck us. As His jewels, God keeps us in the inviolable ark of His love. The seal sets us apart as objects of God's special care and compassion: by it body and soul alike are marked out for God's special guardianship. 'The Holy Spirit is ready to seal your soul, and He will give you a seal which devils fear, a seal heavenly and divine' (*Cyril*).

Chests of sealed treasure on a ship are constantly watched by the responsible officers: if the ship spring a leak, those sealed chests are the first things to be put into the lifeboats. If pirates board the vessel, the great fight is round those chests. If the ship go down, those chests will be the first things the divers will seek to bring to the surface. Whatever human vigilance, foresight, and valour can do will be done to deliver them safe. So with the sealing of the Spirit affixed to sincere believers in Christ. All that God's power can do to help and deliver them shall be done; and when death has buried all things in a common desolation, they shall be the first to be brought back from the depths of earth. (*T. G. Selby, abridged.*)

(See Ezek. ix. 6; Rev. vii. 3.) (2) As God's possession saints shall be claimed by Him in the 'day of redemption' (Eph. i. 14, iv. 30). That day will dawn when our Lord returns in glory to rescue His people from death, the last trace of sin's dominion, by the resurrection of the body, and to 'fetch home' all His own to share His bliss for ever. Till then His redemptive work is incomplete. God has meanwhile sealed them for that day as of the royal family. The world knows them not; they are of lowly birth often, of humble dress, of frail body, but nevertheless God has His secret mark upon them. 'And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels' (Mal. iii. 17).

Sons of Zion, ye are precious in your Heavenly Father's sight;
Ye are His peculiar treasure—ye His jewels of delight;
Sought and chosen, cleansed and polished, purchased with transcendent cost,
Kept in His own royal casket, never, never to be lost.

(*F. R. Havergal.*)

III. How the Seal of the Spirit may be Received.

1. Our hearts must become *impressionable*. No image can be impressed on hard gold, cold wax, dried clay. The Holy Ghost cannot leave His 'character' on a stony, adamantine heart. The great essential is for us to have by grace a tender, melted heart—a heart softened by penitence, and warm with love.

The next discovery I had was of the hardness of my heart. After several weeks' struggling with this obduracy, at last I resigned myself to the Lord, when He was pleased to

regard my distress. While William Brammah was at prayer, the softening power of grace descended and removed the stony heart. (*G. Story, an early Methodist preacher.*)

On July 16, at night, 1757, under my brother Joseph's prayer, I yielded, sank, and, as it were, died away: my heart, with a kind, sweet struggle, melted into the hands of God. (*Thomas Hanson, an early Methodist preacher.*)

2. This seal is *received by faith in Christ.* So speaks explicitly Eph. i. 13–14. The Holy Ghost was the subject of 'promise' from the beginning of man's history, and the 'promise' was kept at Pentecost. But He is still the 'Spirit of promise' to every 'tendered' soul. If we trust Christ to keep His word He will give to us the promised Spirit: He will not fail: as we believe we receive the blessing, even likeness to our Lord. Not by mighty, spiritual effort, but in order to it, is the 'promise' to be received in trust. Holiness is not to be looked for before faith.

You might as well look for the pinnacle before the foundation—for the cream before the milk, for the apples before you plant the tree. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

He gives me always to see that the fullness of the promise is every Christian's privilege, and that this and every branch of salvation is to be received now by faith alone. And it can only be retained by the same means, by believing every moment. We cannot rest on anything that has been done or that may be done hereafter. This would keep us from living a life of faith, which I conceive to be no other than the now deriving virtue from Jesus by which we enjoy and live to God. (*Alexander Mather, an early Methodist preacher.*)

3. The divine image of the seal may become *increasingly distinct.* This is the suggestion contained in 2 Tim. ii. 19. The seal in this case is

regarded as pendent and two-sided. On one side is God's signature, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His': on the other is the believer's resulting duty, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' On God's side is ownership: on our side holiness (see Exod. xxxix. 30). God will not put His seal on a life that is not surrendered to Him. 'God is very jealous of His divine signet. He can never own us without His mark, the stamp of holiness.' As we 'perfect holiness in the fear of God,' the divine seal of ownership becomes more and more legible to all around: as we fully consecrate ourselves to God we come to shine in His full likeness. 'His seal which stamps, His graving tool which engraves the divine image on the soul, is not removed till Christ is formed in us' (*H. B. Swete, D.D.*). The sealing of the Spirit then is an incentive to us to dedicate our life to God (1 Cor. vi. 19-20). Our part is self-dedication: God's part is to sanctify us by the gift of His Spirit: the sealing is twofold, God's gracious, and our reverent, act.

Sir Henry Layard discovered a tablet at Nineveh which bears the impression of *two* royal signatures—the one Assyrian, the other Egyptian. The two kings had been at war: both signed the treaty of peace, each using his own seal. So we, once enemies to God, are now reconciled. Lo! in token of the reconciliation is the royal seal of acknowledgement, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His': here too is our kingly signature of obedience, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' It is a double seal. (*Canon Scott.*)

Oh, the security of the soul that can truly declare, 'I am God's. Through all my life I shall be guided,

guarded, saved by Him.' Oh, the peace of the soul that can say in life's last moment, or if the powers of language fail, can feel, as the shadows gather in the valley,

> Peace, doubting heart! my God's I am:
> Who formed me man, forbids my fear:
> The Lord hath called me by my name;
> The Lord protects, for ever near;
> His blood for me did once atone,
> And still He loves and guards *His own.* (*C. Wesley.*)

V

The Earnest

Jehovah, God the Spirit, shine,
Father and Son to show;
With bliss ineffable, divine,
Our ravished hearts o'erflow;
Sure earnest of that happiness,
Which human hope transcends,
Be Thou our everlasting peace,
When grace in glory ends. (*C. Wesley.*)

Which is an earnest of our inheritance (*Eph. i.* 14).
The earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (*2 Cor. i.* 22).

The symbol of the 'earnest,' as it sets forth the work of the Spirit, is laden with a deep, rich suggestiveness.

I. The Symbol Itself.

What is the nature, what the meaning of an 'earnest?'

The earnest (fastening penny) denotes the part of the price given by a purchaser in making a bargain, or of the wages given by the hirer concluding a contract of service, by way of assurance that the stipulated sum will be forthcoming. It engages each to his part in the transaction. (*Dr. Findlay.*)

But in the New Testament the 'earnest' means more than a pledge. It is an instalment, a part of the full payment, 'a token in kind, a foretaste of the

feast to come.' In old times, before documentary deeds were in vogue, it was the custom to give a sod out of a field, in proof that the purchaser would receive the entire field. Thus St. Paul regards the gift of the Spirit to the believer as an instalment of the inheritance which is to be his. In Rom. viii. 23 he calls the same earnest 'the first-fruits of the Spirit': as the earliest sheaf of the harvest guarantees the entire harvest, so the coming of the Spirit into a believing soul is the pledge of the full glory of heaven. The children of God are 'heirs of God': God is their estate: their inheritance is God Himself in the fullness of His presence and love. Of that inheritance they have an 'earnest'—a fragment of the whole, for already God dwells in them by His Spirit. Not only is the believer God's possession, but God is the believer's possession.

E'en like two little bank-dividing brooks,
That wash the pebbles with their wanton streams,
And having ranged and searched a thousand nooks,
Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames,
Where in a greater current they conjoin:
So I my Best-beloved's am: so He is mine.

(*Quarles.*)

II. The Spiritual Teaching of the Symbol.

As the earnest is part of the inheritance, we may learn something from it about the inheritance.

1. *Its existence.* The inheritance is, we are told, eternal life, where the believer, his body and soul re-united, shall dwell in perfect bliss. Is there an eternal life, a glorious immortality? Sometimes we question whether our hope of eternal life is not a

mere vision, a dream-land created by our desire. A minister once told me how, in the moment of his wife's death, a great surging wave of fear swept over him : ' *Where* is she ? Is she *anywhere* or *nowhere* ? ' Such doubts may come to us all. How shall we dispel them ?

Just as men that would see the stars at noon-day, look not into the heavens above them, but down into some deep, dark well, when *you*, Christian, would have the highest pattern and the surest pledge of your immortal blessedness, gaze with fixed eye down into the depth of that spirit of yours where God's Spirit abides : and though at first you may see nothing but its own cold waters, look and ever look, and you will see at last, glimmering and shimmering beneath its surface, tremulous light points, the shadows of the stars : for the Holy Spirit that is mirrored there, is ' the earnest,' the sample, and the evidence ' of the inheritance.' (*Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*)

If the reflection be in the heart, the reality must be on high. The table of God in the heart is spread by the Holy Ghost with grapes plucked from the celestial vines, with bread of life sent down from heaven, with water from the river of life that flows by the throne of God : and all these are proofs that there are regions where they are found.

John Flavel, being once on a journey, set himself to improve the time by meditation, till at length he had such ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, and such a full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost the sight and sense of this world and all its concerns, so that for hours he knew not where he was. At last, perceiving himself to be faint, he sat down at a spring, where he refreshed himself, earnestly desiring, if it were the will of God, that he might there leave the world. His spirit reviving, he finished his journey in the same delightful frame, and

all that night the joy of the Lord still overflowed him, so that he seemed an inhabitant of the other world. (*Alexander Whyte, D.D.*)

Such foretastes of heaven make us sure of its existence. Even if we do not attain to such clear glimpses, such sensible enjoyments of the coming glory, the presence in our hearts of peace and love and desire after God give the same unshakeable evidence: they are blessings so pure that they can only come from heaven.

Few Christians appear to have enjoyed such abounding, even overwhelming manifestations of the divine presence and favour as fell to the share of the heavenly-hearted Brainerd. Yet it is recorded that, 'The way he was satisfied of his own good estate was by feeling within himself the lively actings of a holy temper and heavenly disposition, the vigorous exercise of that divine love which casts out fear.' (*Dora Greenwell.*)

2. *Its nature.* The earnest is a sample of the inheritance: the estate is the same as the sample, only infinite and eternal.

It is inevitable that we mortals should often wonder what heaven is like. In these days especially men are trying to draw back the veil that hides the spirit-world from our gaze. Sometimes we sadly feel that it is a world of which we know nothing, that it is entirely strange. It is true, indeed, that 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be,' and that 'our knowledge of that life is small,' if we compare all that there is to know, the perfect joy and glory, with our actual knowledge. But our knowledge, in itself, is not small. If we have the earnest, we know enough of the inheritance 'to see

clearly that spiritual and eternal life are identical.' 'Glory is but grace completed.' Heaven is the perfect unfolding of 'God's glorious rose,' of which the bud is planted in every believer's heart, which it fills with its celestial fragrance.

> Close comprest
> Our present holds our future, like a rose
> That may not yet its perfect soul unclose,
> Lest angry winds should scatter and molest.

The mere attempt to guess at what will be in heaven, our probable habits, pursuits, occupations, involves us in a thousand difficulties and contradictions: and yet, while we know not how we shall then *live*, we know in kind, if not in degree, how we shall then *feel*. Faith and love are already at home in heaven: with all that will meet them there, they have already, under lowlier aspects, become familiar. If we know what it is to love God and to be beloved of Him, we shall no longer speak of heaven as if it were a place of which we can at present know nothing. To acquaint ourselves with Christ is to become acquainted with heaven. It is to be able to speak of it, as was said of a saint of old, as of a place where we have already been, and from whence we have but returned upon an errand. If we, indeed, know little about heaven, it is only because we know little about God and Jesus Christ in whom He is revealed, for this, the true spiritual acquaintance with God, 'is life eternal.' (*Dora Greenwell.*)

The Rev. W. Mearns, M.A., a beautiful example of radiant Christianity, was wont to say, 'My life is a fragment of heaven.' (*Minutes of Wesleyan Conference*, 1911.)

If now that we have but the earnest of the Spirit we cry 'Abba, Father,' what shall be done, when rising again we shall see Him face to face? It will make us like God and perfect us according to the Father's will, for it will make man after the image and likeness of God. (*Irenaeus.*)

3. *The certainty of our attainment.* Having given us the earnest, God is bound, is under an obligation, to fulfil His promise. Had He but given one promise of eternal life, it should have been enough to command our entire confidence: but, instead, He has given promises as the stars for multitude, that unbelief might have no excuse. Nay, in His desire to meet our infirmity He has condescended to strengthen His promises by 'an oath' (Heb. vi. 18), that 'solemn confirmation by which men invoke on themselves the direst calamities if they prove false to their word.' He goes even further to command our trust, and gives to each of His children an 'earnest' of the inheritance.

If God have given you the earnest of the Spirit, as part of payment of God's principal sum, you have to rejoice: for our Lord will not lose His earnest, neither will He go back, nor repent Him of the bargain. If you find at some time a longing to see God, joy in the assurance of that sight (however that feast be but like the passover, that cometh about only once a year), peace of conscience, liberty of prayer, the doors of God's treasure open to the soul, and a clear sight of Himself looking out, and saying, with a smiling countenance, 'Welcome to Me, afflicted soul,' this is the earnest that He giveth sometimes, and which maketh glad the heart, and is an evidence that the bargain will hold. (*S. Rutherford,* 1600–1661.)

III. The Resulting Duties.

1. If to us, as to these old-time Christians, God has already given the earnest, let us *guard it as our most precious possession.* Let not the pledge, the title-deed of our inheritance, slip from our careless fingers as we slumber in some arbour of ease. When-

ever we sin wilfully we immediately arrest the joy-giving work of the Spirit in our heart. Sin and hope of heaven cannot dwell together. 'Grieve not the Spirit' if you desire the comfort of His presence. 'Quench not the Spirit' if you would not extinguish the heavenly glow in your soul. This treasure is kept only in the casket of a clean heart: this flower only grows by the wayside of holiness: this perfume only clings to prayerful spirits.

But to the end you may get this earnest, it were good to come oft in terms of speech with God, both in prayer and hearing of the Word. You must, I say, wait upon Him, and be often communing with Him, whose lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, and by the moving thereof He will assuage your grief. When you have sold all that you have and bought the field wherein this pearl is, you will think it no bad market: for, if you be in Him, all His is yours, and you are in Him: therefore because He liveth you shall live also. (*S. Rutherford.*)

2. If the earnest be not in our hearts, let us *seek until we receive it.* If at last we find ourselves in heaven, it will only be because on earth heaven was already in us. 'Our ultimate possession of and by God is evoked from a germ which must be planted in us here if it is to flourish there.' 'What we have made God to us in this world we shall find Him to be in the after one.' Unless, when we leave earth, we carry the earnest in our hearts, there is no reason to believe that we can claim a portion in heaven. 'Christ *in* us' is the only valid 'hope of glory.' Faith, and not death, makes us meet for the inheritance. 'Death's silent lips, though they oft-times bear on them God's kiss, are charged with

no message of reconciliation.' His icy hand makes no saving change in the heart. Thank God, the blessing we *need now* we can *obtain now*, if we sincerely desire it. God's promise to give the earnest of the Spirit is plain (Luke xi. 13). Let your spirit *grasp* these words: let your heart *appropriate* this promise as your own. *Ask* for the earnest, and as you ask *expect*: nay, let your faith go beyond expectation, and put out its hand and *take* the blessing on the spot. Thus, by faith, through the indwelling Spirit, you will find 'glory begun below.'

Jesus, I hang upon Thy word:
I steadfastly believe
Thou wilt return and claim me, Lord,
And to Thyself receive.

When God is mine, and I am His,
Of paradise possessed,
I taste unutterable bliss
And everlasting rest. (*C. Wesley.*)

CLOSING ADMONITIONS

CLOSING ADMONITIONS

O be merciful to me,
Now in bitterness for Thee!
Father, pardon through Thy Son,
Sins against Thy Spirit done! (*W. M. Bunting.*)

Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost (*Acts vii.* 51).
And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God (*Eph. iv.* 30).
Quench not the Spirit (1 *Thess. v.* 19).

Occasion has often arisen in these studies to indicate how the believer may receive the 'fullness of the Spirit' (Acts ii. 4; vi. 3; Eph. iii. 19; v. 18). It is by abandonment of ourselves to, and expectant faith in Jesus Christ who bestows the gift. It now only remains to consider the warnings of the New Testament concerning sins against the Holy Ghost. These sins assume various forms. We may 'lie to the Holy Ghost' (Acts v. 3), by insincere professions, and 'blaspheme against the Holy Spirit' (Mark iii. 29), by wilful, deliberate, unrepented denial of God's truth and love, a sin which in the nature of things 'hath never forgiveness.' But these sins against the Spirit are extensions of those we propose to consider. If we guard against 'resisting,' 'grieving,' 'quenching' the Spirit, we are saved from the greater crimes against Him.

In the passages cited above we have 'a trinity of evils.' Each sin, though all are alike as being done against God's Spirit, is different from the others. The sin of resisting the Spirit is that of the unconverted *sinner*: the peril of grieving the Spirit is that

of the *saint* indwelt by Him : the evil of quenching the Spirit is that of the *servant* of Christ who has received ' some fire-gift of speech or influence.'

I. Resisting the Spirit (Acts vii. 51).

This sin is not limited to the audience to which Stephen spoke : it is the brand-mark of sinners in all ages of the world, as they fight against the saving influences of the Holy Ghost. A child trained in a Christian atmosphere often offers no resistance to the Spirit, but yields the heart gladly to Jesus as soon as the mind becomes conscious of His love. But in most cases, even early in life, the heart takes up an attitude of refusal of God's efforts for its salvation.

It braces itself against God : it hardens itself to His influences. It is perpetually on the alert to circumvent all approaches that would bring it back to Him. It bolsters itself in its attitude of disobedience by every possible reinforcement. (*Psychology of the Christian Life : Dr. Warner.*)

When the Spirit would, as in Bunyan's allegory, capture the city of Mansoul, He meets a stubborn opposition : the gates, the walls are manned by strong defenders. Captain Prejudice, Lord Will-be-will, Mr. Loth-to-stoop, Mr. Self-love, ' that varlet Ill-pause,' and others of Satan's stalwarts, are there in battle array. As He strives to convince men of sin they struggle against Him, in some cases by outbursts of wickedness or by violent contradiction : in other cases by a steady obstinacy.

All this time I was an enemy to God and my own soul. Indeed, at times I had convictions of sin and some concern about my future state : but being surrounded by

those who had no thought of God, and having no one to direct me, I quickly stifled my convictions and became worse than I was before. (*John Murlin, an early Methodist preacher.*)

The most general methods of resisting the Spirit are those of procrastination, or absorption in business or pleasure, or, worst of all, by donning the brazen breastplate of self-righteousness. In any one of these ways men may be led simply to ignore the Holy Spirit's strivings, to pay no attention to His calls. This course is the most deadly of all, for it may co-exist with outward morality, and it lulls us into a self-satisfaction where we have no sense of danger, and do nothing to gain deliverance. To put the hand behind the back, and simply not take food is as fatal as to stretch it out and take poison : simply to ignore salvation is as certain a road to ruin as to plunge into the vilest sin. The sinner may withstand the Spirit's grace, may steel his stubborn heart, may do despite to God's love, whilst all the time he assumes no open hostility to Him ! If this be the case of any of us, well may we pray that the insulted Spirit would not take His everlasting flight ! Thank God, though we may have often striven against Him, obstinately disbelieved, even broken from His embrace, we may say,

After all that I have done
To drive Thee from my heart,
Still Thou wilt not leave Thine own,
Thou wilt not yet depart,
Wilt not give the sinner o'er :
Ready art Thou now to save,
Bidd'st me come, as heretofore,
That I Thy life may have. (*C. Wesley.*)

II. Grieving the Spirit (Eph. iv. 30).

This is a sin into which God's children may easily fall: it is they who are sealed as such by the Spirit whom St. Paul here specially addresses. The 'seal of the Spirit' is the silent, sanctifying influence of His presence in the believer's soul, marking him out as God's own possession destined for eternal redemption (Eph. i. 13–14). He whom we are warned not to grieve is the *indwelling Spirit*, the Guest of our hearts.

1. To grieve the Spirit is to make Him sad. The very word here translated 'grieve' is the word employed to signify the Lord's suffering in Gethsemane. He 'began to be *sorrowful*.' Alas! that the Holy Ghost should suffer the sorrow of Gethsemane through the thoughtlessness of His own 'sealed ones.' If this be our ungrateful conduct we ought to lament with gentle Herbert:

> Then weep, mine eyes, the God of love doth grieve:
> Weep, foolish heart,
> And weeping live:
> Almighty God doth grieve, He puts on sense:
> I sinne not to my grief alone,
> But to my God's too; He doth grone.

If we make sad the indwelling Spirit there will be a reflex of sadness in our own feeling. We cannot trouble Him without also troubling ourselves.

2. There are many ways in which we may sadden the Holy Spirit. The most touching and complete description of the things which grieve the Spirit which can be found in literature is that set forth in the great hymn of W. M. Bunting, the cry of a heart 'pierced with grief' for grieving God:

Sins unnumbered I confess,
Of exceeding sinfulness;
Sins against Thyself alone,
Only to Omniscience known.

Deafness to Thy whispered calls,
Rashness midst remembered falls,
Transient fears beneath the rod,
Treacherous trifling with my God.

Tasting that the Lord is good,
Pining then for poisoned food;
At the fountains of the skies
Craving creaturely supplies.

Worldly cares at worship time;
Grovelling aims in works sublime;
Pride, when God is passing by;
Sloth, when souls in darkness die:

Chilled devotions, changed desires,
Quenched corruption's earlier fires—
Sins like these my heart deceive,
Thee, who only know'st them grieve!

O how lightly have I slept
With Thy daily wrongs unwept,
Sought Thy chidings to defer,
Shunned the wounded Comforter.

Woke to holy labours fresh,
With the plague spot in my flesh,
Angel seemed to human sight,
Stood a leper in Thy light!

Let our readers make a prayerful examination of their hearts and lives in the light of this hymn. St. Paul, however, appears specially to suggest that it is sins of the lips which most often grieve the Spirit—'corrupt speech, clamour, and evil speaking' (Eph. iv. 29–30).

As loud voices ringing through a forest affright the birds from their nests, so does the clamour of

evil speech startle out of our hearts the sacred Dove. 'Evil speaking,' uncharitable judgements, censorious reports, seem to be the 'besetting sin' of earnest Christians. The most zealous believers slip most easily into this way of grieving the Spirit, in their impatience with inconsistency.

Yet on Wednesday (May 31, 1738) did I grieve the Spirit of God, not only by not watching unto prayer, but likewise by speaking with sharpness instead of tender love of one that was not sound in the faith. Immediately God hid His face, and I was troubled. (*John Wesley's Journal.*)

Wednesday.—Was reproved by the Spirit of God for naming something respecting an absent person for which there was no necessity. Deeply humbled on account of it.

Saturday, Aug. 1.—During the last week my soul has not prospered so much through giving way too much to unprofitable conversation. This unfits the soul for union and communion with the Saviour. (*An Inner Court Worshipper.*)

3. The apostle suggests a solemn reason why we should not grieve the Spirit of God in the words 'in whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.' To grieve the indwelling Divine Guest may lead Him to withdraw from the soul: thus the seal of the divine ownership may be removed, and the soul fail to be acknowledged as God's in the day when He comes to 'make up His jewels.' True, the Dove of God is loth to leave the nest He has found in our heart: He lingers long at the heart's window with folded wings: having risen to fly He circles often round the loved place, but, still outraged, He may at length 'take His everlasting flight!'

So Interpreter took Christian by the hand again and led him into a very dark room, where there sat a man in an

iron cage : he sat with his eyes looking down to the ground, his hands folded together, and he sighed as if he would break his heart : ' I left off to watch and be sober : I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts : I have grieved the Spirit and He is gone, I tempted Satan and he is come ; I have provoked God to anger and He has left me : I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent. O eternity ! eternity ! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet in eternity ? ' (*Pilgrim's Progress.*)

Although Bunyan overdraws the picture of the apostate as abandoned by God, yet is there sufficient warning in Scripture that we may grieve God beyond the possibility of repentance. As we contemplate the soul steeled by sin against the light we may cry with trembling Christian, ' This is fearful ! God help me to watch and be sober, that I may shun the cause of this man's misery.' Can it be that we have grieved the Holy Spirit, so that we are no longer conscious of His comforting, cleansing influence in our hearts ? If we fear that it is so, with poignant anguish let us cry to Him :

Return, O holy Dove ! return,
Sweet messenger of rest !
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast. (*Cowper.*)

' The blessed Spirit, Dove divine,' will respond, and gladly flying back, will build His nest in some cleft of our broken heart !

This liberty I enjoyed about three weeks, but then lost it by grieving the Holy Spirit of God. I then walked about much cast down, and knew not what to do. But April 22 the Lord showed me that I did not live as became the gospel of Christ ; I was greatly ashamed before God. I prayed earnestly to God that He would smite the rock

and cause the waters to flow. He answered my prayer. My head was as waters, and my eyes as a fountain of tears. I wept; I sang: I had such a sense of the love of God as surpasses all description. (*John Haime, an early Methodist preacher.*)

III. Quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. v. 19).

The word 'quench' implies the presence of the Holy Ghost in the heart as fire, and suggests the gift of the tongue of fire which sat at Pentecost on each believer Fire is the symbol of love showing itself as zeal in the service of God. The worker for God may put out the fire of the Holy Ghost in the heart: the gift of the Spirit for service may be lost.

1. It is possible for us to quench this fire in *another's* heart. The admonition not to 'despise prophesyings' (v. 20) suggests that to neglect, to criticize harshly, to ridicule the words of a man who sincerely speaks for Christ, may damp, may extinguish his zeal, so that he will be silent, and his gift of the Spirit be quenched. The vocation of many a young Christian has been thus suppressed by unwise and unloving critics who have plumed themselves on their power of clever satire. Rather is it the Christian's part to fan the flame of another's zeal into a steady glow.

2. But more frequently Christ's servants quench the Spirit in *their own hearts*. This may be done in many ways. 'If an angry passion attack thee, the Holy Spirit being tender, is at once straitened: for it is choked by the wicked spirit, and finds no room to minister to the Lord as it wishes' (*Hermas*). Disobedience to the Spirit's promptings,

love of ease, self-glorification, lack of communion with God, confidence in our own powers, the mingling of strange fires with the fire of God, will all put out 'the flame of sacred love' that erstwhile burned brightly on the heart's altar, till nothing remain but ashes, the symbols of a lost zeal. How cold and desolate is the heart when this fire is dying out!

March 9, 1746.—Sunday was a day of solemn joy: yet in the afternoon I felt a great damp, occasioned by my neglecting to speak plainly to some who were deceiving their own souls. (*John Wesley's Journal.*)

Probably the most common cause of quenching the Spirit is the fear of man. How often cowardice keeps us silent, when the Spirit bids us speak!

Feb. 24, 1746.—I preached at Skircoat Green, near Halifax, to a whole company of Quakers. The good man of the house, about fourscore years old, had formerly been a speaker among them, but from fear of man he had desisted, and so quenched the Spirit that he was in darkness for near forty years, till, hearing John Nelson declare the love of God in Christ, light again sprung up in his soul. (*John Wesley's Journal.*)

When tempted so to stifle the Spirit, let us put to ourselves the heart-searching question:

> Shall I, for fear of feeble man,
> The Spirit's course in me restrain,
> Or undismayed, in deed and word
> Be a true witness for my Lord? (*C. Wesley.*)

Instead of quenching the Spirit, be it ours to seek 'a heart that shall be like a living coal,' and to see to it that the 'pure celestial fire' is so fed with the

divine oil of love that it may 'burn with inextinguishable blaze.'

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and think for Thee:
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me. (*C. Wesley.*)

I believe that the Holy Ghost is the Lord and Giver of life: O Thou who hast breathed into me the breath of life, grant me not to receive this living soul in vain.

I believe that the Spirit sanctifieth the heart by His grace: grant that I may never resist, or quench, or defeat, or be unprofitable under His sanctifying operations.

I believe that the same Spirit maketh intercession for the saints with groanings that cannot be uttered: let me, dear God, have a part in the benefit of those groanings, and that intercession.

(*The Private Devotions of Bishop Andrewes.*)

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